

OVEMBER

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# Adventure

Harold Lamb  
Raymond S. Spears  
Arthur D. Howden Smith  
William P. Barron  
Thomson Burtis  
Talbot Mundy  
G. W. Barrington  
Rolf Bennett  
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## Contents for November 20th, 1924, Issue

|                                                                      |                   |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| <b>The Sword of Honor</b> <i>A Complete Novel</i> . . . . .          | Harold Lamb       | 1   |
| Russia—John Paul Jones meets the Turkish Fleet.                      |                   |     |
| <b>The Lone Raider</b> . . . . .                                     | Thomson Burtis    | 34  |
| Kentucky mountains—parachuting among the 'shiners.                   |                   |     |
| <b>Captains of Adventure</b> <i>Nicaraguan Filibusters</i> . . . . . | Josiah M. Ward    | 62  |
| <b>The Cask</b> . . . . .                                            | Rolf Bennett      | 63  |
| Sea—the captain collected rocks.                                     |                   |     |
| <b>Oratio Obliqua</b> <i>A Bit of History</i> . . . . .              | F. R. Buckley     | 66  |
| <b>Sheriff Durand Deputes</b> . . . . .                              | Raymond S. Spears | 67  |
| West—how to handle a badman.                                         |                   |     |
| <b>Slants on Life</b> <i>Visions</i> . . . . .                       | Bill Adams        | 72  |
| <b>Om</b> <i>A Six-Part Story Part V</i> . . . . .                   | Talbot Mundy      | 73  |
| India—face to face, at last, with the Abors.                         |                   |     |
| <b>Mississippi Moonshine</b> <i>A Complete Novelette</i> . . . . .   | William P. Barron | 100 |
| New Orleans—"Big 'Un," the stoker, turns sleuth.                     |                   |     |

\*Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

(Continued on next page) Original from

(Continued from preceding page)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                               |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Warden of the Herds</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>F. St. Mars</b>            | <b>125</b> |
| England—the ant battles against gigantic odds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                               |            |
| <b>Cajun Riders</b> <i>Louisiana Horsemen</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Nevil Henshaw</b>          | <b>131</b> |
| <b>Mostly by Phone</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>G. W. Barrington</b>       | <b>132</b> |
| Texas—the sheriff was a man of few words.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                               |            |
| <b>The Caterpillar Tractor</b> <i>Verse</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>John L. Chamberlain</b>    | <b>143</b> |
| <b>Swain's Outlawing</b> <i>A Complete Novelette</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Arthur D. Howden Smith</b> | <b>144</b> |
| Norway—against his will <i>King Ingi</i> pronounces exile.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                               |            |
| <b>The Camp-Fire</b> <i>A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                               | <b>175</b> |
| <b>Camp-Fire Stations</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                               | <b>182</b> |
| <b>Old Songs That Men Have Sung</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                               | <b>183</b> |
| <b>Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                               | <b>183</b> |
| <b>Ask Adventure</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                               | <b>184</b> |
| A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising sixty-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons Past and Present, Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Forestry in the United States, Tropical Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, United States and Foreign; American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal, First Aids on the Trail, and Health-Building Outdoors. |                               |            |
| <b>Lost Trails</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                               | <b>191</b> |
| <b>The Trail Ahead</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                               | <b>192</b> |
| <b>Headings</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>V. E. Pyles</b>            |            |
| <b>Cover Design</b> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Neil O'Keefe</b>           |            |

## One New Serial and Two Complete Novelettes

**T**HE Civil War is on, and the Sioux of Minnesota rise up against the white interloper. "THE HOMESTEADERS," a five-part story of frontier life by Hugh Pendexter, begins in the next issue.

**W**HEN "Hashknife" and "Sleepy" came to the Thunder rangeland they decided to settle in that pleasant valley, and forever afterward mind their own business; but when a certain mysterious brigand became too offensive—"THE TREY OF SPADES," a complete novelette of the West, by W. C. Tuttle in the next issue.

**A** CAPTAIN of the guards to my lord the Duke needed a quick tongue and a quicker sword in Italy in the seventeenth century. "CARTEL TO WM. SHAKESPEARE," by F. R. Buckley, is a complete novelette in our next issue.

*Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.*

**Adventure is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**





# The Sword of Honor

## A COMPLETE NOVEL by Harold Lamb

Author of "Forward," "The Witch of Aleppo," etc.

*'For they'll harken to such a man through all the swish  
and the sweat,  
Through rattle and rumpus and raps, and the kicks  
and cuffs that they get—  
Through the chatter and tread, and the rudder's wash,  
and the dismal clank  
Of the shameful chain which forever binds the slave  
to the bank.'*

**B**IG PIERRE was the last man to leave the bark, except the apprentice lad and the master. Lowering himself by the mizzen chains he dropped to the river and struck with a resounding smack. He was all of a hundred and ninety pounds of bone and sinew, and he had landed on solid ice.

There was a ladder running from the waist of the bark, but Big Pierre was in a hurry. For one thing, three silver crowns

jingled in his pouch, faintly but cheerfully—and he meant to set about the spending of them as quickly as possible. It had taken him a half hour to pry the silver coins out of the master of the bark, who was a Hollander; so the other members of the crew had gone ahead to seek out the taverns of St. Petersburg.

"—him for a Dutch dog," muttered the sailor, "who would drink till cock-crow on copper copecks. *Bon sang*, but it is cold!"

He turned his back on the wind that cut through his wool jerkin and short jacket. His greased boots and leather cap were Dutch, but Pierre Pillon was a son of Provence to the core, and he swayed across the slippery ice of the Neva as if it were the wet fore deck of a ship.

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Little did he relish the cold breath of the northern seas; he had the swarthy skin and black mustache of the men of Toulon who live under a blazing sun. His long hair, clubbed with a ribbon at the nape, was yellow as ripe wheat.

His wide, sloping shoulders and corded arms were shaped for strength. His hands were noticeable, being scarred and hooked and swollen. The Dutch skipper had looked at those hands when he paid over the silver, thinking that with them Big Pierre might tear a man's throat out.

At Toulon six months ago Pierre Pillon had shipped on the bark that was bound for Muscovy with wines and hemp. In that autumn of 1787 the river Neva froze early and the ice pack of the Gulf of Finland came down, putting an end to navigation and catching the bark still at her anchorage. The master swore in three languages, and set the crew to work, taking in the sails, boarding up the ports and housing the deck. That morning he let them go ashore with a few coins and the promise of their wages in a week.

Pierre's wide-set brown eyes glowed with pleasant expectation. It was a feast day; perhaps there would be a procession of the saints' images; certainly there would be girls to talk to and warm wine to quaff. He meant to see everything in this big village on the northern sea.

He reached the jetties of the dockyards, and cast a glance to windward. Bare hulks of ships, housed in and blanketed with snow, the gray ribbon of the river, stretching away to the forest on the horizon; a gray sky, shot with a single yellow gleam over the swaying pine tops; smoke curling up from log huts on the flat shore; dogs roaming among the deserted wharfs, but not a man to be seen.

Marking the position of the bark, he went on, with a shrug at the forbidding scene.

"Faith, 'tis a land God looks on only at night."

As soon as he turned a corner, a boy appeared around the bow of the bark and hurried after him, yet without making any attempt to catch up. It was easy to keep Big Pierre in sight because he walked down the middle of the snow-covered streets; and it was a simple matter to follow him without being seen, because he never looked back.

Swinging along at a round pace, he waved

his cap at the horses, three abreast, that raced up to him, drawing sleighs, and forced them to turn out. When the drivers cursed he grinned back cheerfully and shouted out his marching song:

*"Malbrouk s'en va-l'en guerre—  
Mironlon, mironlon, mironlaine!  
Qui sait s'il reviendra!"\**

When Big Pierre sang from an open throat, there were many who turned to listen and some who waved back. He had a weather eye out for a tavern all the while, and stared admiringly at the great doors of the churches, painted with amazingly colorful demons and angels—a sight that brought the cap from his head with a fine flourish. Then, at a side street he paused abruptly and ended his song on an unfinished note.

A gun limber was being driven along slowly, three men tied by the wrists to the cart-tail. They were naked, their skin blue with the bite of the wind. Behind them walked three grenadiers, swinging knouts—short staffs to which were attached leather thongs tipped with iron.

At a word of command from a sergeant who brought up the rear, one of the soldiers jerked down his lash with a hiss on a naked back. Blood spattered down into the snow, leaving a trail of red drops between the wheel marks of the limber.

Pierre's shoulders twitched in an involuntary shiver. The muscles in his cheeks grew rigid, and his voice was hoarse when he spoke to the sergeant of grenadiers.

"Ho, là! Where is the tavern of this village?"

He spoke in French and the other understood. The sergeant had long curls whitened with flour, and walked with his toes turned out, his thin back straight as the rattan cane he carried. Pierre, who had seen a bit of the world, knew the earmarks of a soldier who had served under Frederick the Great of Prussia.

"Follow your nose, take the first turning to your left and look for the sign of the Fleur-de-Luys." The sergeant's blurred eyes ran up Pierre's powerful body and fastened on his set face. "So—a little blood makes your gorge rise, my lad?"

"What are these birds?"

"Deserters, that were caught. Thirty-one—" the Prussian resumed his count of

\* Malbrouk, he's gone off to war—  
Who knows when he'll be back?

the lashes under his breath—"thirty-four for that cock. Trying to get off in time of war, they were! You are going to the tavern, eh?"

"Aye," grunted Pierre and rolled away.

The sergeant halted to stare after him thoughtfully, until the boy who had followed Pierre from the ship came up and pulled at his sleeve.

"If it please you sir," the apprentice whispered, "the tall rogue is one of the crew. Master Ruggewein bade me say the others be at the merchants' shops by the bridge. They will be drunk by candle-light."

The sergeant nodded, pursing his lips.

"Master Ruggewein did say," piped up the boy, "that this big lout is a bad one with his hands. You had best take a squad of muskets with you, if you would fetch him in."

The sergeant's face wrinkled in a noiseless laugh. He had seen the Provençal sailor shiver when the knout fell and he felt sure that the man was squeamish at a little blood-letting. The Prussian was a drill-master in the grenadier corps, and he had seldom encountered a chap he could not handle with cane and tongue.



THE candles that gleamed inside the horn windows—the only sign of festival in the Fleur-de-Luys—leaped as Big Pierre came through the door with a flurry of wind-driven snow. A breath of frosty air cut into the aura of drying sheepskins and stale cabbage soup and dirty humans about the red-hot stove.

Pierre looked around and, failing to find any of the men from the bark, made for the counter where a pyramidal candle of some kind of animal fat bubbled and smoked, disclosing the butts of wine casks in the gloom behind.

"Brandy, if you please, Mignon," he smiled at the proprietress, a buxom woman who hailed from Brittany and better things. "One can't get such a thing as brandied grapes in this dogs' village I suppose. No? Well, fry up a cod in oil and leave the bottle—isn't this a feast day? Where are the girls? Why doesn't any one strike up a song?"

He glanced hopefully at the long benches where fat-backed Russians sat sleepily over vodka, or kvass—a fermented milk drink that the Provençal who liked good wine had christened 'pig's lemonade' after a sip—and

at the walls, where straw had been shaken down.

On this straw, stirred by the wind that swept through the cracks, he could make out pairs of feet in the shadows—the boots of a dragoon sleeping off the effects of the Fleur-de-Luys vintages, the rag wrappings of beggars, the bare feet of pilgrims, swollen and calloused. And one pair of broken horsehide shoes out of which thrust toes belonging to a peasant girl, whose yellow hair spread all over the straw.

The very — of a lot, Pierre thought, and turned his attention to the opposite wall. Apart from the others, several men sat here on a carpet that had once been respectable. They had keen eyes and long, thin beards and hooked noses—Mohammedans by their turbans and voluminous *khalat*s—traders by the packs stowed jealously behind them.

"Eh, what are these folk?" he asked the Brittany woman.

"Bashkirs, or some other tribesmen. They come from the south with rhubarb and saffron. But they will not go south again, monsieur."

"Why not, Mignon?"

"The soldiers say there is war with the Turks. I don't know; but those heathen will be clapped into jail all the same." The woman, who had once been pretty, became talkative. Pierre was good to look at, and he had given her a whole silver crown. "Folk come here from all the world——"

"*Bon sang*, and why?"

"It's a rich country. The nobles only carry gold—won't bother about silver or such-like. And I've heard tell the Muscovites have made themselves lords of the heathen empires down in the south. The empress has her palaces full of foreign gentry, to wait on her."

"Who is the king?"

"He died. But Catherine is more of a king than he ever was. Yes, this is a feast day." She glanced at a black and gold icon hanging over the stove with lighted candles beneath it. "She is like a pope, too. The peasants say she is an angel out of heaven. But the *boyars* will cut up something fierce this night."

Pierre, who was hungry for excitement, wanted to join them instantly. "These *boyars*, where can a chap find them?"

"*Tiens*, my good lad—they are at the winter sports or the theater; they're the



grandeess, the princes, certainly." She glanced at the door anxiously. "You may see them in the street—such as ain't under the tables. Only their servants come here."

The woman from Brittany ran back to the kitchen, returning in a moment with the cod Pierre had ordered, smoking in bubbling oil in a wooden dish. Wiping the perspiration from her red face, she leaned close to him to whisper—

"Go back to your ship, my man. Go, quickly!"

Pierre took the platter and looked at her inquiringly.

"This is an evil place, monsieur. Ah, pray to the good God and get away out of sight before it is too late."

Between mouthfuls of the cod, washed down with white wine, the man from Provence surveyed his surroundings. It was not like other taverns, but he had seen worse. True, the men were not sociable and no one laughed; still, he would hit on one of his mates from the bark presently and go the rounds of other taverns. The evening had barely begun.

"*Corbleu*—what is wrong here?" he asked.

"This land is not as others. There is a curse upon it. 'Tis a simple matter to get into it, but one does not get out again in a hurry."

Pierre thought of the bark, and the snow barrier that was rising around the town. Yes, he could believe that. He was in for a bad winter, but he never bothered his head about the future. In his thirty years of life he had been in many tight places, and enjoyed fighting his way out. He poured a glass of wine for the woman and waited for the loosening of her tongue.

"*She* is the curse of this land—that witch of an empress, monsieur. She is worse than the blind witch of Tanteval, who lives in caves and sings when the surf roars and a ship is wrecked. *She* is an old woman, but her face is young. It is quite true that she killed that poor man, her husband. And all her lovers she raises to great power, then casts them aside."

"I would like to clap eye on her," observed the sailor, his mouth full of cod.

"I have seen *her*, of nights!" The woman crossed herself and breathed quickly. "Ah, if it is known that I talked of these things they would burn me. Catharine rides in a gold coach without wheels, drawn by roaring beasts. And her skin shines more than the

gold—perhaps witches' oil is rubbed on it, and she rides to the devil's Sabbath. A giant with one eye always sits beside her—a prince of Muscovy."

Pierre waxed cheerful. All this would be well worth seeing. He knew the superstitions of the coast of Brittany.

"Faith," he laughed, "you will be saying that this lord is twin to the King of the Auxcriniers, who looks up from the waves. Him with the livid skin, when the lightning flashes, and the beard of shells. Whoever sees him is sure to be shipwrecked, I've heard."

The woman hesitated, and clasped her hands in her apron.

"Just the same, monsieur, I say to you that *she* is seeking for souls."

"The deuce!"

"Souls, or serfs—'tis all the same. *She* lures men to serve her, and then there is no escaping. They will carry off a fine, upstanding lad like you for the army——"

The door was flung open, and the candles flared. An old man, his head covered with what looked like a woolen nightcap, and a pack strapped to his back, entered hurriedly. He panted as he leaned on the arm of a young girl.



PIERRE forgot witches and the catching of souls in an instant. He twirled his mustache with both hands bowed with an air, sweeping his cap over and the earth that was the floor of the tavern.

He knew the man for a Jew, but the young woman was more than pretty. Even while she shook the melting snow from her dark tangle of hair, and her foxskin *skuba*, she glanced around the room, her brown eyes resting longest on Pierre and the group of the Mohammedan traders.

Here was no blowsy Dutch *wauw*, but a young thing of fire and laughter. Pierre, whose wits were not laggard, noticed that the old man was frightened and the girl amused.

"Good day, little sparrow," he cried. "Eh, it is good to come in out of the storm, is it not? Only say—shall I clear a place for you at the stove, or will you share a glass from this fine bottle?"

It seemed to him that *she* understood and would have answered, but changed her mind so quickly that he was not sure.

He had seen her type before: The poise of the head, the olive skin, the full eyes and

the delicate lips. This was no daughter of gnomes, or child of a Muscovite ox. A Gipsy? Perhaps.

He stood in front of her, holding out a freshly filled glass, smiling. His eyes, clear as a boy's and as fearless, smiled as well as his lips. The high spirits and the vitality of this girl in the foxskin *shuba* appealed to the sailor's mood.

Although she shook her head, her lips curved and white teeth gleamed vagrantly. Pierre saw that just under her eyes the skin was lighter than above, as if her face had been veiled from the glare of a burning sun. A ring, nearly as long as her middle finger, aroused his interest at once.

It was heavy silver, set with sapphires and small emeralds that made a pattern. Apparently meaningless, this pattern was formed of an Arabic word, possibly one of the numberless talismans of the Moslems, possibly a signet. Pierre looked at the merchants on the rug.

One had risen and was fingering his simitar hilt irresolutely. Pierre—though he watched for it—did not see the girl make a sign, but presently the Bashkir squatted among his companions again, turning his back as if indifferent to the newcomers. But Pierre felt sure that the merchant knew this girl, and that she was an Arab; more likely, a Berber. He wondered what a woman of the southern tribes was doing in this place. Before now he had seen such, standing in the slave markets of Algiers.

The Jew kept plucking at her sleeve, scrabbling his beard with a shaking hand. She paid absolutely no attention until she had finished her scrutiny of the room. Then she spoke to him and he went off like a well-trained dog, to sit in the darkest corner, and the girl walked around the circle of tribesmen.

They did not look up, but Pierre thought she spoke to them and they answered, before she went to sit by the Jew, as far from the glow of the candles as possible. One by one the Bashkirs got up and went out, leaving their goods. Only urgent need would take such men into a storm, and only the risk of life itself or greater plunder would induce them to leave their belongings unguarded.

Pierre shrugged and drained his glass, and being by then in high good humor, lifted his voice in song—

"The captain of police is dead,  
Because he lost his life."

Neither the song nor the bottle was ended when the sergeant of grenadiers appeared in the Fleur-de-Luys and came to the counter, ordering rum laced with brandy.

"A little while before he died,  
This fine chap was much alive."

"Come, my likely lad, empty a noggin with Sergeant Kehl of the Guards," the grenadier proclaimed huskily.

With a cupful of Pierre's brandy inside him, he confessed to being a veteran of the Seven Years' War, Bülow's regiment. The Russian service was a smooth thing, he said, after the pipe-clay and button-shining discipline of old Frederick. The Russian officers were easy-going—didn't know a bayonet from a ramrod—and left everything to the sergeants. And it was no hard matter to pick up money, one way or another.

"Aye," assented Pierre, "enlistment bounties."

Kehl drew the back of his hand across his lips and glanced up at the big sailor.

"No harm in saying regimentals would look well on a strong-set lad like you."

"Fifteen years," laughed the Provençal, "I've been with the colors of France. Aye, ropeman, topman, and sergeant of marines. I was with D'Estaing off Algiers."

"*Gerechter Herr Gott!* That is different." Kehl lowered his voice confidentially. "I'll tell you something. These Russians are cattle—they've only one general officer who is worth his snuff. That's old Prince Suvarof, and he rose from the ranks. They must have foreign gentry to command their ships for them. Join up, and you'll wear a sword in a year—a lively lad with a hard head like yours."

"Do they keep you for seed?" Pierre shook his head. "I've served my time."

Kehl was a man of firm convictions. He believed that any peasant could be won over with a drink and a promise. Already he had the others of Ruggewein's crew locked up in the guardhouse. To bring in a French sergeant of marines as a volunteer would mean a double bounty, whereas if this man should put up a fight and taste a musket butt, Kehl might not get anything.

He was doubly mistaken in thinking that Pierre was a peasant and would not fight a crimp's squad.



"The frontier is closed," he snarled. "The master of your bark has paid you off. Your mates have all entered the ranks——"

"Crimped, eh?" Pierre frowned and then laughed. "Name of a name! That pinch-beck Ruggewein has saved his rix-dollars. Nay, Master Kehl, I'm for the south, where a chap can set his teeth in white bread and olives."

"What then?"

"Who knows? I'll hear the bells of Avignon again. I'll drink white wine again, and sleep on the deck of a fishing *tartan* when the breeze comes up soft-like off the land."

Kehl had no imagination, and cared nothing for Provence or the men of that coast. But a thought struck him and he put it into words crisply.

"The empress' fleet in the Black Sea, down in the south, is at war with the Sultan of the Moslems. The Russians have sent for a foreign admiral, to take command. *Ach*, yes. One is coming from that country of sea traders and rebels, over across the ocean."

"The United States?" Pierre glanced down interested.

"So. I see you know your way around the world. At the arsenal it is said that this man who is coming was once a pirate—his excellency, Jean Paul Jean, or some such name."

"Never heard of him. But, wait—*bon sang!* Is it John Paul Jones?"

"So."

Pierre set down his glass untasted and leaned his elbows on the counter.

"Tell me of this Black Sea and this fleet."



THE brandy warmed his vitals, and he threw off impatiently the hand of the woman from Brittany, who was making efforts to warn him not to listen to Kehl. He was trying to decide how much of his companion's gossip was a lie.

The Black Sea, Kehl explained with an air, was the sea of the Mohammedans in back of Constantinople. They had proclaimed a holy war against the Russians, who had built and equipped a fine fleet of some twenty large ships—two being sail of the line—in the rivers that emptied into this sea.

Prince Potemkin, the reigning favorite—now in Petersburg—was to take command in person of the greatest army ever gathered

under the eagles. (Kehl, because he understood French and was on duty at headquarters, had his ear to the ground. Most of the Russian officers spoke French to one another by choice, and the foreigners by necessity.)

"A fine, upstanding chap like you," he added, "could pick up more than a dram's worth of loot. Aye, and a fat share of prize money. And why, you ask me? Because, my dear fellow, the sultan has mustered in the bashaws and such-like from the Barbary Coast."

"The corsairs? From Tripoli—Algiers?"

"So! 'Tis said they have the cabins of their ships plated with gold. They walk on silk, nothing less; aye, the very knives and spoons they eat with are full of jewels."

Pierre, who had seen well-born Berbers and Osmanlis supping off mutton stew with the aid of their fingers and a water basin, did not smile.

"Every mosque down there is chuckfull of treasure—more than Potsdam palace itself, I swear. And their women—*wunderschön*—better than these here dishwater drabs." He pointed his pipestem at the owner of the *Fleur-de-Luys*.

But Pierre was no longer listening. Over by the wall, in the shadows, the woman of the foxskins was looking at him, without flinching. He could see the whites of her full eyes, emotionless as an animal's—cold as a basilisk. And his memory harked back fifteen years to Africa.

To a *tartan*, a fishing craft of Toulon, blown offshore and dismasted and drifting until the three lads in it sighted the lateen sail of an Algerian felucca, and were picked up.

For the two others, his companions, who turned renegade and became Mohammedans, he had no blame. They disappeared into the white-walled alleys of a rich city; they had weapons at their belts, and the chance to use them—free men in the brotherhood of the coast.

Because he was massive of shoulder and heavily thewed no choice had been offered Pierre. For two years he had lived on the rowers' benches of the Algerian galleys. And because he lived—which few did—in the stench and the filth of those chained to the oar, with the bench for his bed, his muscles had hardened to iron. The glare of the sun and the toil of the oar had tempered him as metal is tempered by heating and thrusting into cold water.

He had been lashed by the boatswain's whip. His back, from the nape of the neck to the loins, still bore purple scars.

At the end of the two years when he escaped from the Algerians during a lucky fight off Cape Bona with a Portugese sloop of war, he made a vow to the Holy Mary of the Seas. This vow was that he would never submit to the lash again. Let a man flog him and he—Pierre Pillon—would kill that one with his hands.

That was why he had winced at the spectacle of the flogging of the deserters a while ago. It reminded him of the galley's waist and the bloodied backs of the slaves.

A rush of cold air put an end to his reverie. The tavern door had been kicked open, and a pair of strapping figures swung into the room. They were men as large as Pierre, resplendent in white silk *khalats*, bound with red sashes. Both wore turbans, and red morocco boots.

Yet they were not Mohammedans, and Pierre wondered if they were *boyars*—noblemen—until he scanned their broad red faces and saw the cudgels that they carried instead of swords. One, who was puffing at a large meerschaum pipe, spoke to Kehl, and then they began to search the room, running about and jostling the drinkers, kicking benches out of their way and poking into the straw.

"Heydukes in the livery of a high official," explained Kehl. "They are looking for some Gipsy or other—a girl who was to sing at their master's house. She ran away."

Out of the corners of his eyes Pierre glanced at the Jew in the shadows. The woman who had come with him was no longer to be seen, but the Provençal fancied that the packs by the wall had changed position, and that the girl was among them, crouching down with the fur cloak pulled over her.

He said nothing, because he did not relish the behavior of the heydukes.

"She came in," added Kehl. "And she did not go out. *Na*—they will run her down. Look, now, the lads are having a little fun."

The sergeant chuckled, but Pierre stood up, swearing under his breath. One of the servants had halted to survey the refugees of the straw. He aimed a kick at a protruding foot, missed, and, with a foolish grin, poured the hot coals from his pipe into the broken tip of the peasant girl's shoe.

She screamed and whipped around in the straw, and the other heyduke caught a handful of her tresses, trying clumsily to thrust them into the blaze that was springing up where some of the coals had fallen.

Pierre Pillon usually acted on impulse, without bothering to think things out. Walking over to the newcomers, he kicked out the fire in the straw and stamped on the fingers of the second heyduke. He had taken the half empty wine bottle from the counter. This he upended and thrust down the neck of the man with the pipe.

For several seconds the heyduke gaped at him over the butt of the bottle, until the white front of the uniform turned plum color. So did the man's face. He began to breathe heavily and finally found his voice.

"Put him down! Crack his skull!"

Pierre stepped back, eyes alert. But those nearest him gave way, hastening to the walls. His heel struck a stool and as the two Russians ran at him he reached back and gripped it. A twist of his shoulders hurled it into the first man's chest, knocking the big heyduke flat on his shoulder blades.

The other struck at Pierre's head, and the sailor ducked under the cudgel, taking a kick in the stomach as he did so. His assailant, bellowing with rage, ran at him again. Pierre, standing his ground, moved his head aside as the cudgel came down on his shoulder. His knotted fist went out, catching the heyduke full in the throat.

The man spun back against a table, and reeled, dropping his stick and coughing. For a moment he gasped, his hands fastened on his throat, then ran out of the door unsteadily. His companion followed as best he could.

At once with a scamper and rush the vagrants of the straw fled from the tavern, crowding to be first out of the door. Those at the tables followed, and Pierre saw the Jew and his girl slip out with them.

"*Ventre au diable!*" he swore. "Is the tavern a lazar-house? What's amiss with all these chaps?"

Kehl was studying him with professional interest, astonished at the latent power of the man, and the ease with which he had put down two formidable antagonists with cudgels.

"Those two ninepins you bowled over were servants of his Highness, the Prince-Marshal Potemkin. He's the reigning

favorite you know—emperor in all but name—and your goose is cooked my lad. When the Prince-Marshall hears that you've helped a wench get clear of his heydukes, you'll swallow a bullet the wrong way."

"Hark'e," said Pierre suddenly, more than a little disappointed at the tame ending to what had promised to be a pleasant brawl. "I've had enough of Petersburg. The folk here can't sing; their liquor makes 'em doleful; and they can't fight! I'll join the service, but——" He poked a knotted finger into the Prussian's mid-riff. "But only with the rating of sergeant of marines, and service in the Black Sea fleet. A bargain's a bargain. Is it agreed?"

"Agreed! Quick's the word, my tall buck. When you're in regimentals all Potemkin's heydukes can't smell you out."

Pierre nodded. He had thought of that, but he had changed his mind for another reason. To walk the deck of a king's ship again, to take a crack at his old enemies, the Turks, and to serve under Paul Jones, the American. All this tempted him greatly—Pierre knew more than a little about Paul Jones, who was a Chevalier of France.

"Remember old Schnapps and Snuff," he said dryly, when Kehl turned back to the counter for a last glass and a leer at the woman behind the counter by way of payment, "I'm for the south and the marine guard. You're for the bounty."

"Agreed."



AT THE guardroom by the Neva bridgehead, the sergeant brought his heels together with a click and saluted smartly. A young lieutenant who was dealing piquet against himself looked up and yawned.

"Sergeant Kehl, with a man for the ranks!"

"Well, take him away! Bed him down with the other cattle!"

"With the *Herr Leutnant's* permission——"

Kehl bent his stiff back a little and lowered his voice, explaining that this man was different; a —— of a fellow, a regular Turk, and strong as an ox. Besides, he had been sergeant of marines, claimed to be a veteran of the French service. So, would it not be better for the *Herr Leutnant* to have the recruit sign the rolls?

"The deuce! I see very well you want the rix-dollar bounty before sun-up." The

young Russian shuffled the cards together, looked at his watch, and drew a long paper rolled up at both ends from a drawer of the table. "You there—what's your name?"

"Pierre Pilon, sir."

"Ah, you speak French. Curse me Kehl, here's a proper paragon of military virtues—Ulysses as well as Mars." He dipped a quill into ink and scrawled on the roster. "Pierre's the —— of a name—our non-coms will never get their tongues around it. You'll be Peter—Pietr, son of—— Who is your sire, if you know?"

"Mathurin, sir."

"Who is your master?" As the Provençal hesitated, he turned to Kehl impatiently. "Who is his owner?"

As far as Pierre's memory went he had been a vagrant of the coast, picking up a lean living among the fisher folk, who were little better off themselves. But neither he nor his father before him had been a peasant, bound to the land and a seigniorial lord.

"The sea, monsieur," he hazarded.

"Well, no matter. We'll enter you as a masterless man. Make your mark here." When the sailor had drawn something resembling a star on the rolls, he nodded. "Now, Peter, son of Little Matthew, you've pledged yourself to serve the Empress Catharine, the anointed of God. Be brave and obey orders. Dismissed!"

But Pierre glanced at Kehl, who clicked his heels again and coughed. The lieutenant called for his servant, who gave the Prussian a silver coin which he pocketed swiftly.

"Your excellency——" his dry lips parted, showing yellow teeth, in what was meant for a smile—"this Frenchman is an old hand—knows the musket drill. He requests to be sent to the Black Sea, rated sergeant of marines."

For the first time the officer glanced at Pierre, taking notice of his massive build and the eagerness in his swarthy face.

"You, Pietr—you *request* to be sent to that lake of the ——?"

"Aye, sir."

The lieutenant looked puzzled and pulled at his mustache.

"Oh, burn and blister me, Kehl, this is rich. A man asks for service down there, where——" he checked himself and laughed with relish. The sergeant of grenadiers sniggered. "I'll see to it, Pietr that you're rated properly."



It struck Pierre as a bit queer, this enlistment. Moreover, he did not like Kehl's amusement. But he was dealing with strangers, and entering a new service. On the king's ships he had never exchanged as many words as this with the gentlemen of the poop; yet the officers of his acquaintance had always kept promises made to the men.

"Now go to the deuce or the recruit battalion." The lieutenant was looking at his watch impatiently. "The empress and the imperial retinue will pass over this bridge, and I want you two mangy dogs out of here."

Pierre saluted and followed his companion to the door. They had barely gained the street when they heard a distant musical jangling of sleigh bells that came nearer rapidly, echoed by shouting down the street.

The sentry at the bridge called out, and in a moment the officer appeared from the guard-house, buckling on his sword belt and fastening his tunic at the throat and snarling at a score of soldiers who tumbled out half asleep and fell into ranks beside the new recruit. Kehl watched with a covert sneer, as the young lieutenant fumed and swore at the guard for slovenly dressing and fell to beating them into better alinement with the flat of his sword.

The bells swept nearer rapidly and the lieutenant ran to the front of his men and flung up his blade.

"Pre-sent arms."

A Jew who had been bartering tobacco and sweets at the guard-house hurried to cross the street and upset his basket in his hurry. Stooping to gather up his scattered possessions, he fumbled in the snow, his head craned over his shoulder.

Around a bend in the street a troop of hussars came at a trot, stretching the full width of the bridge. The huckster began to run out on the bridge. Pierre saw the two lines of black horses sweep past, knocking the Jew headlong. Then he heard a curious roaring and blaring of music.

A sledge, filled with horns and bagpipes and men slid by him, a sledge drawn by a dozen bears, growling and snarling. He turned to look at the Jew who was trying to crawl out of the way.

The bears, lashed by men who ran alongside, overtook the unfortunate trader. When Pierre saw him next he was writhing

in the snow at one side of the bridge, bleeding from the throat.

Sleighs whipped past, filled with men and women in court dress, wrapped in furs, laughing, with flushed faces.

Last of all came a long sleigh, gilded, two gold eagles poised on either side the driver. A dozen white horses drew it, and on the runners and behind stood linkboys holding blazing torches.

"*Slave bohun!*" cried a voice down the street. "Glory to God—health to your Imperial Majesty!"

Pierre had a glimpse of a swarthy and strikingly handsome nobleman whose gigantic body was clad in the white dress uniform of a cavalry colonel. Over his belt was a gold star, on his chest the ribbon of an order.

Beside him sat a woman, erect and powerful as a man, in a long ermine cloak.

"Health to your Majesty!" cried Kehl.

The sleigh sped away across the bridge, a second troop of hussars trotted by, and the lieutenant dismissed his men. Then he strode over to Pierre, the drawn sword swinging in his hand.

"So, you keep your feet when the empress passes?" he bellowed. "We must teach you a thing or two!"

For the first time, as he replaced his cap, Pierre was aware that the other civilians near him were rising from their knees with bared heads. Only the soldiers of the guard and himself had stood while Catharine passed along the street.

Before he could answer the officer struck him twice over the head with the flat of the saber. The force of the blows half dazed him and he dropped to the snow. When his brain cleared, he checked an impulse to rush at the man with a sword. The lieutenant was his officer now, and he—Pierre Pillon—a soldier of the empress.

Blood trickled down his face as he stood up, and he wiped it away quietly. But the youngster with the sword had caught the flash in his eyes, the quick twist of anger on his lips.

"Sergeant Kehl," he ordered briskly, "take this fellow to the barracks under guard. He is a bad customer."

The officer was returning his sword to its scabbard, hoofs drummed again on the hard beaten snow, and four riders swept down the street as blown leaves flicker in the wake of a wind gust. Coming abreast the guard-house they quickened their pace

instead of slowing down, and the sentry's startled challenge went unheeded.

As they passed the lighted windows, Pierre saw three Moslems, wrapped in flying cloaks, bending over the necks of their horses. They were gone in a second—four blurred shapes streaking across the bridge, while the sentry, running out of his box, stared after them and fingered his musket. But Pierre had seen that the other rider was the girl of the foxskins, and the three were the Bashkirs with whom she had spoken in the tavern.

By now the sentry had made up his mind that they were no heydukes, and, spurred by a shout from the officer, he fired his piece. The bark of the musket—fruitless as a pebble tossed into the darkness—was answered by a woman's laugh, shrilling over the drumming hoofs and vibrant with savage delight.

"Na," grunted Kehl, "that would be Kalil, the Gipsy girl of Potemkin."

He listened until he was sure that the riders had got away from the town, then he nodded to Pierre and struck off toward the barracks, being, as the lieutenant had said, in a hurry to spend his rix-dollar while wine was still to be had in the taverns.

 THE next day Pierre was sent to a camp on the outskirts of Petersburg and given a uniform and knapsack. The hair on the front half of his head was shaved off, and he was made to strip with the others of his detachment and enter a bath house. Here he was steamed and scalded and, following the example of his companions, rubbed himself down with a coarse towel. Then he waded through a tank and lined up to submit to the casual scrutiny of a surgeon who walked through the room holding a scented handkerchief to his nose.

At sight of Pierre's scars, the Russian paused a moment and raised his brows, saying something to the non-commissioned officer who accompanied him. Pierre could read in their faces that they thought him a refractory peasant who had tasted the knout frequently, and might give them some trouble.

And this same sergeant kept a close watch on him during the first drill, after the recruits had got into their new leg wrappings, double pantaloons and sheepkin *shubas*.

The Provençal had expected to be sent

south, and it was not pleasant to realize that he had been thrust into an infantry company. But Pierre had learned a lesson from the buffet he had been given that first evening. He had been gulled by Kehl, and he was not going to whine about it. Instead of a berth as sergeant of marines, he had been put into the ranks. This was Kehl's doing.

Pierre set about making the best of a temporarily bad bargain. The first thing to be done was to familiarize himself with the Russian words of command, and this was not difficult because his companions were green men who had to have everything dinned into them.

They were strange men, slow-moving, voiceless—cheerful enough after dinner. Pierre thought the food—gruel and black bread with vodka at times—poor enough, but these shaggy, blue-eyed men gorged themselves on it with muttered delight. Among them were short, slant-eyed beings who never spoke and who looked like old men—Finns—and others with long, oily hair and blunt faces—Tatars as he came to know later.

Pierre discovered that the muskets issued them were of French make, and he showed those of his squad how to clean theirs—as well as the mysteries of the ramrod and priming pan. He could think and move three times as quickly as any of them, and carry the weight of knapsack, musket and heavy coat without feeling it during a day's drill.

When the sergeant found out that Pierre knew the drill and gave no trouble—being rather helpful in coaching the other *moujiks*—he left the Provençal to his own devices.

And Pierre was satisfied when he overheard his captain say to a staff officer who came through on inspection that the company would be sent to Kherson on the Black Sea while the snow made transport easy.

"They are not good for much, it's true," assented the other, "but down there they'll learn to use the bayonet and that's all Suvarof cares about."

"Well, they're not the White hussars," the captain pointed out. "But they won't turn their backs when the first cannon goes off—I'll answer for that."

Pierre wondered how these peasants could be expected to stand against the veteran armies of the sultan. The next day the sergeant was replaced by a foreign drill-master, and at the end of the week

Sergeant Kehl appeared with his rattan cane and his thin smile.

For the first time the recruit battalion was put through musketry drill, without powder or balls. Kehl's method was simple: He showed by example what he wanted done with each command, loading, ramming home the charge, and wadding, dropping in the bullet, priming the pan, and then aiming and firing. He alone had powder horn and bullet sack. Months later Pierre learned that the recruits were never trusted with these until they were in the field, confronted by the enemy.

Then Kehl called out men from the ranks and made them go through the motions. When they made mistakes he would order them to present arms, and lash their backs with his supple rattan. This he could use with telling effect, and Pierre saw one tow-headed Russian sway on his feet, tears wetting his face. For not standing rigid he was given a beating over the head that finally stretched him unconscious in the snow.

The company, muskets grounded, was kept at attention all the time, until Kehl's sharp eye picked out Pierre. Then the sergeant was pleased to bark an order to stand at ease and to call out the Provençal.

Pierre shouldered his musket and stepped forward. For a quarter of an hour without a moment's let-up Kehl put him through the manual, and the musketry drill. The big recruit handled his weapon, which weighed close to twenty pounds, with its bayonet, as easily as a pike. Kehl seemed surprized and ill pleased when he discovered that his victim of the tavern had mastered the Russian commands, and Pierre's mustache twitched in a grin.

"*Shagom marsh!*" snapped the sergeant.

Pierre did not move. This was something new.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Ah, you are sullen! You give a bit of lip to an under-officer? Good! *Pre-sent arms!*"

Instead Pierre executed an about face as Kehl stepped behind him, with the rattan raised to strike. It was unprovoked, deliberate—Kehl's way of dealing with a man in the ranks who stood up to him.

"Listen, sergeant," said the Provençal, "if you lay that stick over my shoulders I'll make a new buttonhole in your vest with this bayonet."

Kehl checked the downward swish of the

cane and glared at Pierre who was still smiling, ominously. It took a full moment for the meaning of the recruit's words to dawn upon his understanding. Then his teeth clicked together and his eyes narrowed.

"Many years ago," went on Pierre, "I vowed to the Holy Mary of the Seas that I would let the life out of the next chap who tried to flog me. Glad it's going to be you."

Amazement gave place to cunning in the Prussian's thin features. He looked around and saw no officers near. Visibly, he reflected. Pierre waited, sure of his man.

"Good!" said Kehl ponderously. "You have threatened a sergeant. Tomorrow it shall be reported. Tomorrow—" he hesitated, and his wrinkled face cracked in a smile—"well, the orders are out, and you may as well know. Your battalion goes into a wagon train, to Moscow and the Black Sea."

Pierre, leaning on his musket, looked at him inquiringly.

"I will not report you, and you will march with your regiment. *Tful* My bold lad, you'll never see a town again. Of those who go to the Black Sea not one in a hundred comes back. If the Turks do not rip you up, the tribesmen will do the business for you."

"Tell me," inquired the Provençal, "is it true that *Monsieur le Chevalier* Paul Jones is going with us, to the fleet?"

"Aye, he landed at Riga a week ago. What is it to you?" he added curiously.

"Ah, you do not understand. Ten years ago, I served on Paul Jones' ship, the old *Richard*. But you have never fought on the deck of a ship—you can not understand. No other commander is like that chap. When I heard that he was to take over a fleet of the empress, I said, 'Pierre, my lad, you also must serve this empress; then you will see *Monsieur le Chevalier* again, and tell your mates in Toulon all about it.'"

"But you are in the infantry!"

Pierre shrugged and spread out both hands, hinting at his indifference to such a slight obstacle to his plans. He had the light heart of the southern Gaul, who weeps when most happy, and laughs in the face of black calamity—who fights like a wounded tiger when it is least expected of him.

And in one thing he prophesied truly. Few lived to tell the story of what happened in the Black Sea in that year 1788, but Pierre Pillon was one of them.



## CHAPTER II

## THE EYES OF KALIL

CLOUDS banked low over the line of the forest on the horizon. The spires and windmills of Petersburg faded into the shroud of mist and windrift of snow, tossed up by the gale that swayed the tree-tops. Black masses moved over the snow, following the ribbon of road, cut through the forest—sledges filled with great bales covered with tarpaulins. The center of each sledge had been left empty and here were crowded twenty or thirty men, protected a little from the bite of the wind.

Behind the sledges came a supply train, behind this flat sledges, bearing caissons and artillery, behind this a scattering of sutlers' outfits, a few Gipsies and packs of wild dogs.

Two thousand men, a battery of field guns and a consignment of stores were on their way to the Black Sea.

Pierre Pillon had never seen such a land. Earth and sky met in a long line in the distance. The forests had been left behind. Always the sun rose on the left and set on the right, red in the mist. And at all hours the howling of wolves was heard.

They camped every night at the watch post stations—log huts scattered around the stables—shrouded by dancing wraiths when the wind whipped up the dry snow. Truly, Pierre thought, this land was akin to the sea. But he had never crossed a sea so vast as this plain that was with him when he rolled out of his blankets before dawn and when he went to sleep.

In the heart of the frozen sea they halted for a week, with the domes and cupolas and the white walls of a glittering city in the distance.

"Is this Constantinople, brother?" a man of his squad asked, after gazing a long time at the city.

"Nay," Pierre laughed.

He had the ability of some veterans of picking up a strange language quickly, and he could make himself understood in Russian eked out with *lingua franca* after a fashion. "Constantinople has minarets like spears. It is on the sea, like Toulon. Besides, here is too much snow."

He noticed that while the infantry remained in camp, the officers spent most of their time in the city, and after a while he learned that it was Moscow.

It was a month after leaving Moscow that they began to see in the distance a river that was not frozen over. The snow, too, was gray instead of white and patches of reddish earth showed here and there. The sun was higher in the sky, and its warmth struck through their greatcoats.

"Surely Pierre," said his squad mate, a stoop-shouldered man with wistful eyes—a fur hunter, Feodor by name—"this is early for the spring thaw. The priests have not yet held the Easter procession."

"We have been journeying south. The heat of the sun is greater. If we kept on long enough, little brother, we would reach a land where there is no snow."

The fur hunter shook his head incredulously. But Pierre's prophecy came true. In a few days the caravan was halted while they fitted to the sledges the wheels that had been strapped in the loads. The highway was no more than a line of muddy ruts, and the number of horses to each wagon was doubled. Pierre's battalion was chosen to push ahead of the caravan with some twenty wagons loaded with grain and ammunition. The infantry no longer rode in the vehicles; they marched beside the road and helped haul the wagons that bogged down, and pull the horses out by the tails.

He worked with a will, feeling sure that now they would come to the end of this empty land and find vineyards and orchards, and perhaps olives and muscat wine. Were they not going to the south-land, on the sea? *Tiens!* There would be taverns and girls to chaff and fresh fish. All this he told to Feodor.

"But there is a maiden, who wears her hair down," exclaimed Feodor after listening, sorely puzzled, to the Provençal's prophecy of good things to come. "She must belong to a *boyar*. Only the nobles have fetched women along this weary way."

Pierre looked around and shaded his eyes. Sure enough, an officer's carriage was moving past the files of foot soldiers, and in it was no officer but an olive-faced girl wrapped in a colored *khalat*.

"Why, it's Kalil," he muttered, "that singing girl of the tavern."

For a moment he cudgled his brains as to why the woman who had been keen to fly from Petersburg should have lingered with the column, and why her friends had deserted her—then gave up puzzling as a bad job. As the carriage passed he took a sprig

of jasmine that he had picked to carry in his musket, and tossed it into her lap.

She glanced back, searching the faces of Pierre's squad until she picked him out. Then she flashed him a smile, whether for the incident in the tavern, or the flowers, he did not know. He watched the carriage out of sight, humming under his breath, and grimaced at a new thought.

"We're in Asia now—captain said so. Perhaps we'll see some Turks before long. They have curved swords—cut off heads like grass with a sickle. What will you chaps do then?"

"The *batyushna* will watch over us."

"The little mother? Who the deuce—oh, you mean the empress. Nonsense; she's a thousand leagues off by now."

"Our officers will look out for everything."

"Feodor," said Pierre out of the depths of his experience, "those officers of yours will hang back when the *pas de charge* is beaten; they'll stay in a safe place until it's all over. When you come back all cut up, maybe with prisoners, maybe with just wounds, they'll fall you in and march off at your head. Then they'll be given a cross or a ribbon or a sword of honor, and you bullies will have an extra tot of rum—those of you that haven't turned up your toes."

"As God wills." Feodor frowned, trying to understand. "Nay, Pietr, we have heard there is a *batko* waiting for us down yonder."

"A little father?"

The fur hunter nodded cheerfully.

"Little Father Suvarof. When it is time to charge he only says—'Come ahead!' Then he marches with us and God gives a victory. That is the way of it."

Pierre assented without being convinced. He was wondering how Feodor and his mates would act when things warmed up, when they smelled powder. They were as green as sprouts; and Pierre had seen the Moslems fight.



IT WAS one night after the battalion had crossed the river that the girl of the *khalat* came and sat at Pierre's fire. For the first time the men noticed that they had found no post station to halt at, they were in the open steppe, and fuel was scanty.

Near the brush shelter that had been built for the captain they had seen a kind of stone monument. It was a woman's figure,

more than life size, the face turned to the east. Feodor was troubled by it.

"The Tatars in the company know what it means, but we do not know. All over the steppe these stone women sit—like that. It is not good."

"How, not good?" demanded Pierre, who was filling his clay pipe.

He had been singing, because his companions liked it. They had an ear for a tune, although the Provençal considered their chants both cheerless and endless.

Feodor shook his head.

"When one of the stone women are moved to a village it takes ten strong oxen to pull them to the west, although one can draw them to the east. They were made by men who came out of the east a long time ago and who will come back again some day to where these women are."

"What of it?"

"It is not good to see one at night. *Ekh*, and here we are sleeping under the feet of that one."

Pierre made himself as comfortable as he could on his blanket. He sniffed the odor of grass, warmed by the sun. The bivouac that evening was on dry ground. Before then they had slept in mud, chilled and restless. He had no fault to find.

"Eh, didn't I tell you! Look at that!"

Feodor crossed himself and pointed to where a slim form was moving toward them from the direction of the stone woman and the captain's hut.

The girl of the *khalat* stepped out of the shadows, and Pierre sprang up to offer her his seat. She knelt, holding out her hands to the fire, masses of black hair about a white throat. The Russians drew away from her but Pierre lifted an elbow and twirled his mustache. Her brown eyes flickered up at him, and she made room for him on the blanket.

"*Tiens*," muttered the Provençal, sitting, "if this is a new trick, it is at least entertaining."

"I can speak a little French, monsieur," she said suddenly. "But that pig of a sergeant does not know it. He is asleep in the cart."

"Good," smiled Pierre. "You are no Tsigani. A Gipsy sits on the ground, a Berber kneels."

For a moment she searched the faces of the other soldiers, until she was satisfied that they did not understand.

"True, monsieur, my mother was a Berber of Fez, my father a Levantine, a Jew. With my father I have been to many cities and army camps, because he is a trader. But at Petersburg he disappeared and I am on my way back to my own place. At Otchakof on the Black Sea," she went on, "there is a Turkish army and *serais* where I will have silver for my songs."

Again the Provençal nodded. He had seen such *serais*—heard the monotonous note of *rabeb* and *gosba*, beloved of the Arabs. Once or twice in the alleys of Algiers he had seen women of Fez who were slaves of the Turks. But this was no ordinary woman, who could speak French, whose hands were tapering and delicate. Moreover, she was beautiful.

"Your name," he asked, "is Kalil?"

"Kalil, daughter of Mokador. I am frightened." She glanced at the big Provençal beseechingly. "This battalion has lost its way. It will never reach Kherson, where the Russian army is."

"The deuce! And why not?"

She leaned her chin on her hands to gaze into the fire for a while without answering.

"Today," she replied at last, "I saw a rider on the skyline, who turned his horse back into the tall grass. The officers of the Roumis, the white men, did not see him. But he will come back with others."

"Tribesmen?"

"Aye, this is their steppe."

"Well, they'll get a few bullets to crack their teeth on."

Pierre was rather amused at the thought of undisciplined riders attacking a strong column well supplied with powder.

"Go!" She smiled curiously. "Go, and tell your captains that they are being spied upon. They will not listen."

"You are a Mohammedan, Kalil." He had noticed that the arch of her brows was darkened with *kohl* and the tips of her fingers tinted with henna stain.

She flung up her head, startled but not afraid.

"Then go, O brother of the ravens, you who are so shrewd, tell your captain that I am of the Moslem. Why not?"

But Pierre had no liking for that.

"Is it written in the Book-To-Be-Read, O Kalil, that a daughter of Islam should go unveiled before men?"

She turned on him suddenly, making no effort to conceal her surprise and curiosity.

"Nay, in the *khaysamah* it is written that in going before eunuchs and Jews and Christians there is no shame. You have been among my folk, Monsieur Pierre, you know our laws. You are a follower of al-Islam!"

"Nay," Pierre laughed. "I bear the scars that your folk put upon me at Algiers. I know that there is a holy war proclaimed and I go to send as many of your warriors to the prophet's paradise as I may."

"It is well for you," she assented. "If you had been a follower of the true prophet, one who had turned back to the *giaours*, I would have left my knife in your liver when I ride away this night."

As Pierre was silent, she went on in a lower voice.

"In the tavern at Petersburg you did not betray me when the dogs came to nose me out. You overcame them with your bare hands. So, in return, I will take you with me to safety."

"How?"

"I have said this column will not be permitted to find its way back to the others. I know where two horses can be stolen from the lines. We can ride to Otchakof."

"Why, to Otchakof?"

Kalil glanced at him, a world of flattery in her tawny eyes. In truth, she had seen few men like this one, with the bones of a giant, the yellow hair of a *giaour* and the dark skin of her own people. The flattery was art but the admiration was sincere, and it irked her that Pierre took no account of either.

"It is a great city, held by the Moslems, and the Roumis will never take its forts. The galley of Hassan Pasha is there, and the pigs of Roumis will never take that, either."

Pierre took his pipe from his lips and thumbed it thoughtfully.

"Hassan of Algiers?"

"Aye." There was pride in her voice. "You have heard of the galley." She pointed to his boots caked with dry mud, and his stained coat. "You did not come hither to serve with these oxen. I know that you would like to be on a ship again. Many *giaours* aid Hassan Pasha, and their reward is a just share in the spoils."

"And——"

"In the cabin of the pasha are chests of gold and fine silks and rubies from Badakshan and strings of pearls that you could wind around both arms. I have seen them."



Come to Otchakof and see for yourself. Hassan of Algiers is a just man."

In silence Pierre listened; the soft gutturals of the woman's voice mingled with the hissing of the fire. Her long hair gave out a scent that was not musk or aloes, but more like jasmine when the sun is warm upon it. Why not go with her? She must know her way out of this infernal steppe. Aye, she could lead him down to the sea.

And then, a few mumbled words, a shaving of the head, other garments and he could turn Moslem—renegade. Life would be easier than this.

"Fly away, little Kalil," he said slowly, "I'll bide here."

Anger darkened her cheeks and narrowed the full line of her lips. When she realized that he meant what he said, she rose and went away, her slender back and the poise of her head expressive of utter scorn. When she had disappeared into the shadows he listened until he heard the tramp of the squads going the rounds to change guard.

"Eh?" he muttered, bending down.

Blue eyed Feodor stared up at him anxiously.

"Did she put a spell on you, brother?" I saw her stop and look at that stone woman, just like a sister—"

Pierre nudged him, and held up a hand for silence. They could hear a bustle in the horse lines, a trampling and shouted questions that no one answered. Then hoofs thudded off into the darkness and lanterns winked into being, wandering around aimlessly. Before long he saw his captain, who had gone to investigate the disturbance, walking back to the hut and went to intercept him.

"Tribesmen around? Danger of attack?"

The officer, who had a liking for the Provençal, was more than a little irritated. The guides had wandered off the trail that day, and now horses had broken loose from the picket lines. His quarters were highly unsatisfactory, and he was sleepy. One of the horse tenders had sworn that he saw a witch ride off on a pony, as if it were a broomstick. He wondered what had got into the men. He was new to field service, but the *moujiks* of his estate had been just as prone to restlessness on a warm spring night.

"Back to your place! And stay away from vodka if you can't keep your tongue between your teeth."



THE next day Pierre was sure that they had lost their way. Men were sent to a hillock to study the lie of the land, and they changed direction more than once before noon. All around them the stiff grass, brilliant with poppies and the purple cornflowers, swelled over dunes that were like waves.

And over one of these ridges rode a thousand horsemen in skull caps and fluttering caftans, brandishing long muskets and simitars.

They charged down on the column, firing as they came. Only one company of Russians was in time to loose a volley before the horsemen were on them, slashing with the deadly curved swords.

Pierre was in his squad with the advance—half a company under his captain. They had pushed on ahead and three hundred yards separated them from the wagons and the main body. In the brilliant sunlight Pierre could see clearly all that took place. The raiders got home with the first charge, something that should never have happened if the infantry had been properly drilled, and accustomed to their muskets.

As it was, with the bayonets they beat off the horsemen, who circled around the rear, wiping out the detachment in that place.

"What are those fellows, your excellency?"

Pierre's deep voice, addressing his officer, was the only one heard in the advance guard, where the men had turned and were staring blankly at the scene behind them.

The captain, who had grown red in the face, fingered his sword and his reins irresolutely. It was his first engagement and he was wondering what was expected of him.

"Bashkirs," he muttered. "Tribesmen from over the border. Listen——"

As if satisfied with the damage they had inflicted, and the few horses they had driven off, the raiders had formed in a solid mass on the slope across from where they had waited in ambush. Now a shrill yell broke from the mass, high-pitched, exulting.

"Allah il akbar—ya Allah!"

It was the ululation of the Moslems, and Pierre had heard it before, when the Algerian corsairs sailed out to meet their prey. An answering growl rose in Pierre's throat, as he watched the dust settle around the wagon train. He expected to see the carts close up, the infantry form to face the raiders, the front rank kneeling, the rear

standing. Then a few volleys, and the tribesmen would scatter. Such chaps as they would never charge massed infantry.

"Only look, little brother," exclaimed Feodor, nudging him. "Christ aid us!"

Pierre now saw why the Bashkirs had shouted. Between his half company and the main body one powder wagon had been moving in advance of the others. Beside this solitary wagon the major in command had been riding when the attack came. The driver of the wagon was whipping his horses toward the knoll on which Pierre and his comrades stood.

The major, after hesitating a long time, was spurring in the other direction, to the battalion. And a Bashkir in a crimson cloak with heron's feathers in his cap was racing down to cut off the officer.

The infantry by the wagons could not fire on this rider, who was now between them and their major. The Russian had drawn his saber, holding it high over his head. The Moslem, riding like a fiend, swept down on him. For a second the two blades flashed together, and dust swirled up.

Reining his pony about, almost in its tracks, the Moslem slashed at the back of the officer who was slower in recovering. Then, when the wounded man swayed in the saddle, the Bashkir killed him with a second stroke. The major's orderly, spurring a big cob desperately, fired a pistol at the Bashkir and missed. Again the simitar lashed out. The orderly swayed and slid to the ground over his horse's rump.

Standing high in his short stirrups, his cloak fluttering like a flag in a stiff breeze, the Bashkir swordsman darted back to his companions who greeted him with strident acclaim.

*"Ya kutb—ya kutb—Allah il Allah!"*

The major's horse with an empty saddle, trotted up to the main body and took its place among the officers. The wagon reached Pierre's half company, which scattered to let it draw up its center.

Pierre looked around impatiently, expecting an order to double back to the battalion. The Bashkirs, emboldened as tribesmen always are, by a first success, were showing signs of attacking again. But his captain was talking in a strained voice to the company sergeant who was a veteran of several campaigns.

"Bashkirs across the border—probably

the Tatar tribes are out as well—communication between the army and Moscow must be cut off—bad business."

It became clear to Pierre all at once that the Russian captain did not know what order to give. The men were watching him, the sergeant was waiting for an order, and nothing was done.

Meanwhile, although the tribesmen were getting ready to charge, the battalion began to break formation. The death of the major had left it leaderless. No one appeared to take his place. Instead, officers shouted contradictory orders, and the wagons at the end of the line were moving away from the raiders. One company of infantry shouldered arms and wheeled off beside the wagons.

Another company seemed to be in disorder. Pierre stared, too amazed to swear. He saw that the Russians were trying to form a square with the carts, although there was no need of it, and just at that moment it was suicidal.

The Bashkirs loosed their horses. A ragged volley, fired too soon by the infantry, brought down only three or four men. Only a single line, some two hundred bayonets, faced the tribesmen who were now gripped by the blood lust. Yelling, they crashed into the bayonets, or swept over the two companies that stood their ground stolidly.

What had been a few moments ago a disciplined battalion became now a mass of men without formation. Groups here and there stood back to back. Other groups gathered around the carts, which were motionless, the Tatar drivers having freed horses from the traces and fled. It was like a pantomime in miniature—puffs of smoke darting up, the glitter of simitars in the sun, horses rearing.

Only a dull murmur reached the advance detachment on the knoll, a murmur that was made up of the thudding of hoofs, the booming of firelocks, the neighing of horses and the hoarse voices of men.

Pierre saw a familiar figure in claw-hammer coat and gaiters—the sergeant who had broken in the raw recruits—with a squad of men at bay near one of the wagons. He had abandoned his cane and picked up a musket. With the bayonet he skewered a leaping Moslem, clubbed another with the butt. His movements were as unhurried as on the parade ground at Petersburg.

Before he could get back to his men a rider lanced him, and turned, to drive the spear again into the body that threshed on the ground.

Pierre leaned his musket against his shoulder and spat on his hands. It would be their turn next.



TWO hundred or more Bashkirs detached themselves from the throng that was slaughtering and plundering the remnant of the battalion, and rode toward them at a hand pace. The sergeant dared not wait any longer for an order from the bewildered captain. Hastily forming his squads into a rough triangle, with its point toward the tribesmen—three squads to every side—he called to the outer rank to kneel. This done, the pans of the muskets were primed and the men waited.

"Hold your fire," growled the sergeant.

Feodor, kneeling by Pierre, was muttering a prayer. He was as calm as if waiting for the evening pot of gruel, gazing at the oncoming riders with childish curiosity.

The tribesmen began to trot, lashing their horses, up the slope. Some of their long firelocks bellowed, the smoke swirling almost into Pierre's eyes. He heard the whine of the small bullets and his captain's voice.

"Fire, my children!"

The muskets flashed and men began to cough as the fumes of the black powder got down their lungs. Pierre made out horses passing, and with his bayonet turned aside a spear aimed at his head. Then the smoke cleared away and he saw nothing but the green slope with a dozen wounded tribesmen crawling away or lying still.

His officer still sat in the saddle of a big gray horse, saber at his shoulder. Pierre heard him muttering:

"Valuable wagon—major's orders are to look after it."

Then he began to sway from side to side, and his orderly ran up, catching him as he clutched at the mane of his charger. He had been shot in the head.

The Bashkirs attacked the rear of the detachment and this time plunged in among the bayonets. Taking the second rank from the other two sides the sergeant cleared the triangle with the bayonet and gave them a volley as they rode off.

They had lost a large percentage of their

men in the two charges and contented themselves with firing on the wagon from a distance. The Russians, most of whom had never handled muskets before, answered as best they could. Pierre, drenched with sweat, worked swiftly with ramrod and powder horn, making the most of what time was left him.

Meanwhile the Bashkirs had been forming for another charge, and surged up the knoll again with their lances. They struck full upon the dwindling knot of men by the wagon, and Pierre was driven back against a wheel. Half blinded by sweat, he thrust with the bayonet and felt it bend against a man's chest: then he jerked it free, took the barrel in his hands and cleared a space around him.

By degrees the pressure around him grew less, and he wiped his eyes with his sleeve to clear away the sweat. Then he looked around.

A yard in front of him lay Feodor, thin arms clutching the breast of his coat, which was slashed open. The blue eyes of the fur hunter stared straight up into the sun without blinking. Only his ruddy cheeks had been drained of all color. Pierre leaned on his musket, panting, blood running from the bent bayonet down over his fingers. The Bashkirs were riding away, toward their main body which was withdrawing over the steppe with the wagons of the Russian battalion.

"The deuce—it's all over!"

The battalion itself was visible again—scattered white bodies, stripped of all clothing, half hidden in the trampled grass. But around the powder wagon with Pierre some twenty men still stood, weapons in hand. Evidently the tribesmen sent to wipe them out had found the game too costly, and had gone off to claim their share of the booty taken by the others.

A soldier beckoned to Pierre and pointed to the ground beneath the cart. Here, beside the shivering driver, the captain lay, his head turned toward them. Pierre dropped to his hands and knees to try to hear what the officer was saying.

"Powder—wagon. Major's orders—drive to Kherson." The wounded man stabbed the air with his finger. "South—south!"

Nodding, Pierre regained his feet and looked around for the sergeant. He found him lying under a dead horse.

"Stiff," he ruminated. "Captain going,



too. Those balls in the skull always end a chap—wonder that he said anything at all. Well, we're alive, after a bit of warm work, too."

Not only was he alive, but Pierre perceived that the Russians were all looking to him for a word to what they were going to do next. They had heard the dead sergeant praise him and had seen the captain give him instructions. They were incapable of thinking for themselves and the big Provençal became their leader without a word spoken.

Pierre threw back his head and laughed into a blazing sky.

"*Sacré nom d'un cochon*—Sergeant Pillon, it is! Epaulets at the first skirmish and the command of a battalion, with its wagon train. Kehl told more truth than he thought. Well, what's to be done now?"

He thought for a moment and decided they must count noses, take stock of their supplies and get away from the scene of the fight.

Little indeed he knew of the Russian tongue, but he could give the routine orders, and they expected no more than that. After the dying captain was lifted on top the load and screened from the sun by a thatch of sedge branches, Pierre ordered the injured horses removed from the harness. Two of the Tatar ponies, overlooked by the pillagers were rounded up, making six fit enough to draw the cart.

Meanwhile a trench was dug and the dead of the half company were given shallow burial. After a glance at the vultures and wolves thronging to the bodies of the battalion, Pierre abandoned thought of doing anything for *them*.

Bullet pouches and the rations in the knapsacks of the slain were taken, and Pierre looked grave when he found only three or four jugs of water in the cart. They had powder enough for a lifetime.

After every man had been given one cup of water, Pierre signed to them to pile their knapsacks on the load. Then he blew down the muzzle of every musket to see if the touch-hole were clear. When the pieces were loaded again, and twenty others, taken from the field, he walked to a ridge to make a survey of the country.

The last of the Bashkirs had disappeared toward the east, and the green sea of the steppe was empty of human life. Pierre signed to the driver to start his horses, and

walked to the head of his little column. He did not know how far they were from the sea or what lay in front of them, but he believed that he could steer a course due south as his officer had directed. He would take his bearings by the stars.

"Come along, my heroes," he called out. "*Shagom marsh!*"

The trace chains rattled, the wagon axles creaked and the injured groaned in unison, but the sailor rolled along in front of his detachment—"To keep a lookout for'ard," he assured himself—and lifted a mellow voice in song.

"Malbrouk's gone off to war;  
Nobody knows when he'll be back!"

### CHAPTER III

#### THE GALLEY

KALIL, a dun-colored pony between her knees, and two Bashkir swordsmen to attend her, rode like a gray shadow over the green dunes, halting only to rest the horses and to sleep. She had coaxed the warriors from the chief of the raiding party, and when they would have sat down to argue for hours concerning suitable rewards, she silenced them with a word—

"Hassan!"

She could ride as well as they, and from somewhere she had conjured up a veil that covered her breast and face to the eyes. It was she who, when they entered a barren region of clay gullies topped by sage and tamarisk, pointed out the glint of water to the south and east.

But the eyes of the three were drawn to dense columns of smoke that rose from a grove of olive trees beneath them. Here should have been a Cossack village, and, since it was burning, here they would find Turks.

The Bashkirs rode down the hill at a gallop, reckless of rocks and hidden gullies, fearful only of being too late for the looting. They sped over a level patch of tilled land, where the grain had been trampled before their coming. And they swore in their beards when they found a regiment of cavalry dismounted and ransacking the last of the burning huts—a regiment of *spahis*, the crack cavalry from Constantinople. Where the *spahis* had looted the tribesmen knew that not so much as a belt or a woman's shirt would be left for late comers.

With Kalil they were brought before the *aga* of the regiment, a Turk bearded to the eyes, with a jeweled crest to his turban.

"*Ohai*," cried the girl, "Hassan hath kindled a torch on this side the river. Have the Russians fled before his wrath, O captain of a thousand—slayer of unbelievers?"

Beneath the flattery was a note of keen anxiety, and she held her breath until the *aga* made response.

"Nay, daughter of Islam. The dogs sit in their camps yonder and their ships sit at anchor. The time is not yet." Suspicion, lulled by her instant admiration, assailed him. "Who art thou and what are these jackals?"

The Bashkirs snarled but knew better than to make response to a colonel of the Turks. They looked at Kalil uneasily, having no doubt as to what punishment would be theirs if she failed to give satisfactory account of herself.

By way of answer she held out a hand, drawing back the loose sleeve of the cloak. The officer reined his horse nearer, stared at the ring set with sapphires that covered two joints of a slender finger, and salaamed respectfully.

"The signet of Ghazi Hassan, the unconquerable, the chosen of Allah—the ring that sets a seal upon all hearts, unlocks all doors. And yet—why dost thou ride from the direction of the *giaours*?"

"'And yet' quoth the dog when the wolf was at hand!"

Kalil laughed, and the Turk tugged at his beard irresolutely, for his men were looking on and had seen a woman laugh in his face.

"Because thou hast burned a village of peasants, hast thou grown to be equal in honor to the lord of Cairo, the conqueror of Syria, the scourge of Allah upon the sea?"

Kalil looked around with some interest, at the bodies that lay strewn in the street—bodies stripped even of socks and shirts, and marked with a crimson cross made by two slashes of a simitar upon the breast.

"Nay," she added in a whisper, "even Hassan must have eyes to serve him among the *giaours*, and a tongue to tell him a certain thing he would know. Make haste and set me across the river, then give us fresh horses and an escort, and Hassan himself will thank thee."

The Turk, who had been more than a little doubtful, was won over by boldness

It was not well to detain a messenger of Hassan of Algiers.

Before midnight they had passed through the bivouac of a Turkish army division, and had entered the redoubts of Otchakof. While the tribesmen stared with all their eyes at more cannon than they imagined ever existed, and the lanterns of pickets, at the mounds of earth over powder cellars, and the riding lights of the squadron anchored in the roads, Kalil disappeared.

When they beheld her again they did not know her. She was sitting in an open palanquin, and in the light of the stars and crescent moon they caught the sheen of silk garments. They were aware of fresh perfume, aloes and attar of rose.

From the city the Moslems who now accompanied Kalil led them down through a line of water batteries to the shore. Here they dismounted and entered a skiff, rowing out to a galley at anchor near the jetties—a long vessel with a high poop and the towering, slanting yards of lateen sails—apart from the other men-of-war.

A voice from the head of the gangway hailed them.

"Who art thou?"

The Berber laughed softly.

"Have I grown to be other than I am, O Jaimir? Knowest not Kalil of Fez, the slave of Hassan—the eyes of Hassan?"

"*Ma'shallah!* The pasha awaits thee with impatience this long time."



ALTHOUGH two officers of his staff, wide awake and armed, sat in his cabin; although Kalil had taken off her slippers and walked lightly as thistle blown over the desert floor, Hassan started up from his quilt, out of a sound sleep. One hand gripped the butt of a pistol in the sash at his waist.

"Ha!"

A glance at the girl and he dismissed his companions, and Kalil salaamed. Detaching the veil, she tossed back the mass of her dark hair with both hands, knowing that the pasha ever took pleasure in contemplation of her beauty. Knowing, too, that she had served him well, as had happened many times in the past.

Before coming to him she had touched her eyelids with kohl and her lips and finger tips with dark red henna.

"What word do you bring, daughter of Mokador?"

"The way is open for thee to strike."

"The praise to Allah!"

In Hassan's full cheeks the muscles tightened, and his black eyes gleamed.

Years ago Hassan, too, had been a slave. A boatman, then a corsair, he had risen by his strength, his dominant will and shrewdness to be pasha of Algiers. He had served the sultan by sea—his men were fond of relating how he had put his ship beside the flagship of Orloff, yardarm to yardarm until both had blown up. Scarred and undaunted, he had rallied the scum of Constantinople to follow him to victory on the island of Lemnos.

They called him Ghazi, the Conqueror, when for fifteen years he fought the Christians in the Levant and Egypt. They said of him that he had never met defeat. In this *jehad*, this holy war, against the Russians, Hassan's name was a rallying note for the fanatical.

And his eyes were coldly shrewd.

"Who is he—this new admiral of the *giaours* on the Black Sea?"

"O lion-heart of Islam, harken to my tale, which is of the weakness of thy foes. I have seen the first blow struck."

"Bah—the village was taken as sport for my men, to blood them a trifle."

"Nay, before that the Bashkir tribesmen set upon a full battalion of the Russians and slew all but a score. A wagon train was taken."

Hassan considered her, fingers twined in his beard.

"What lie is this? Hast thou proof?"

"Two of the tribesmen wait upon the upper deck. They will tell thee that the Bashkirs of the plain and that Tatars of the Krim\* are in arms and will move against the Russians——"

"By the head of Othman, by the veil of the Ka'aba, does a woman make plans for me? I know that well enough. When the panther brings down the stag, the jackals will rush in. Thy tale?"

Kalil hastened to remedy her mistake, and the pasha weighed every word.

"Know then, O favored of Allah, that I went to Tsargrad.† There, in accordance with thy wish, I went from one place to another, singing and making sport for the officers, who sometimes talked of their plans, not knowing that I understood. The Russian soldiers are like sheep—they will follow where they are led, but without a leader

they can do nothing. They call their pasha One Eye, and he is a great lord, ambitious and covetous, but knowing naught of warfare and caring naught for his men."

Again Hassan nodded. He had heard similar reports of Prince Potemkin, who was blind in one eye.

"But what of the fleet?"

Kalil wriggled with delight.

"In the journey out of the snow country to the steppe, I sang to the officers, and heard other things. The fleet is now under command of two men—a Greek, who is a coward, whose name is Alexiano, and a Prussian, Prince Nassau-Siegen. The Greek is the very father of deceit, and the other is little better."

"Words! I sent you to Kherson to discover what kind of man comes from the Russian cities, to take command, over these two."

"True, and yet this pair, the Greek and the Prussian, will not readily yield their command. Even jackals will snarl when a dog comes to their kill. So, Allah hath made ill blood between the *giaours*." Her delicate lips curved in a smile. "The new admiral is an American."

"A what?"

"A man from over the great ocean where the sun sets."

Hassan puzzled over this impatiently until his brow cleared. Understanding came to him and he swept both muscular hands down his beard with an exclamation of triumph.

An American, he reasoned, would be a man from the United States—the new nation that has cast itself off from England's protection. All Hassan knew of these people was that American merchantmen had been taken at will by the corsairs of Algiers and Tunis. Until tribute had been paid, and Tripoli, eager to have a hand in the game, declared war on the United States, and the Mediterranean was scoured for shipping under the American flag.

No men-of-war bearing the new flag had been seen by Hassan, and he had the contempt of a good Moslem for a people that paid tribute to avoid battle. It struck him as the greatest of good fortune that the vice-admiral who was to take command of the Christian fleet in the Black Sea—who would be pitted against Hassan of Algiers—was an officer of this nation of merchants and weaklings.

\* The Crimea. † The Emperor's City—Petersburg.



"Ha!" As suddenly as a panther strikes, his hand closed over the girl's throat and he tensed with sudden suspicion. "That is a lie. My men have heard that this new admiral is a *bahadur*—a very father of battles. So he must be English."

Kalil made no move to free herself. Her eyes shone with adoration for this man who could have crushed her throat in by tightening his fingers. When he drew back at last she seized his hand and pressed her lips upon it.

"Lord of my life, have not my words been truth, before this? The empress summoned this officer to serve her from Paris."

"But why—why did he come?"

All of her twenty years had been passed in the bazaars where the rumors of the world are bruited and tasted and passed on. She had the rare gift of picking out the grain of truth from a whole harvest of falsehoods.

"He is a man who is like to a chained hawk, when on land. He is restless until he stands on the deck of a ship. Besides, he wishes to draw his sword against the Turks, with whom his people have some quarrel."

Hassan nodded. This was possible.

"What is his name?"

Kalil essayed it.

"The Russians call him Pavel—Paul. The French, *Monsieur le Chevalier Jean-Paul-Jean*. The English officers swear that he is a pirate."

Bowing his head, Hassan made no effort to conceal his pleasure.

"All things are possible with Allah! But when does he take command?"

"In Moscow it was said that he would start from Tsargrad within a month. He must be here now."

"*Inshallah!* As God wills. When the wind serves, coming from the sea, I will hoist the sails and give battle to the infidels. I will send fireships against them."

"To hear is to obey." She threw her arms around the pasha's knees and rested her dark head against them. "O my master, it is thus that I joy to see thee, a conqueror, protector of the faithful—" she murmured praises, calling him another Othman, a second Dragut, the wrath of the seas.

Putting her aside, Hassan rose and entered the adjoining compartment where a turbaned janizary stood guard by an iron lantern. Around the bulkheads here were ranged sandalwood chests and rattan boxes

piled one upon the other. A heap of weapons lay in one corner, although the hilts of the simitars and tulwars were set with precious stones, and the scabbards inlaid with gold and silver.

This was the treasure of Hassan—fruit of the Algiers *pashalik* and years of plundering. Wiser than most in his day, Hassan had gathered together the personal fortune of a *wazir* of the throne, and had concealed his wealth from the jealous eyes of the officials in Constantinople. Thus he could be open handed with his followers who worshiped him the more for it, and he could sleep easily of nights, for his gold was in the cabin beside him. So it happened that he passed most of his time on the swift sailing galley.

Now, while the janizary knelt, face to the deck—not to see the unveiled face of the slave girl who had followed Hassan into the cabin—the pasha unlocked a chest and drew out at random a sandalwood casket. This he gave to Kalil, who pressed it to her forehead before opening it.

With a murmur of delight she lifted to the light a chain of flawless, matched rubies.

"Behold, Kalil," Hassan complimented her, "the gift is fitting, for thou art a precious thing, without flaw. Abide then on the galley till thou art rested."

"Nay, my lord," she laughed, eyes aglow at his praise, "I will betake me to Kherson and spread the tidings of thine attack."

"See, my lord," she cried, knowing another way to please him. "This chain is an omen. Red as the fire in these stones will be the infidel decks, when thou hast put foot upon them."

The following day, the shrewd Algerine did not neglect to give to the Bashkirs presents twice as costly as they had hoped for.

And when they turned their horses toward the steppe, they rode with news for the tribes. They had heard of the first victory of Hassan, over the Russian flotilla commanded by a Prussian prince, when the Turks drove Nassau's ships into the estuary.

They had seen picked companies of janizaries and musketeers from the forts going aboard the vessels of the Moslem squadron, giving them double strength in men.

They had seen a hundred *agas* and as many *reis* assemble in council under the awning on Hassan's great three-decker, to which he rowed with them in a barge from

the galley. A thousand throats had greeted them:

"*Salaam, el ghazi— Hassan, bahadur, salaam!*"

Three others of the squadron were as large as the flagship, and the tribesmen had counted sixteen frigates, and more than a hundred smaller craft. These, mounting heavy guns, were to take the Russians in flank while the fireships were sent into the enemy, and Hassan's squadron with its reinforcements from the fort was to close with the Russians and board them.

As soon as the wind came astern, Hassan had sworn that he would advance. And the Bashkirs knew that he would keep his word.

#### CHAPTER IV

*The piece of gold that will buy a bale of silk in the bazaar will not buy a bullet outside the walls.*—ARAB PROVERB.

IT IS the way of men in the ranks the world over to give nicknames to their commanding officers. The Don Cossacks and the Zaporoghians had christened the general of their division *Batko* Suvarof—Little Father Suvarof.

Whereas Prince Potemkin, commander-in-chief of the forces of the empire, was known to them as "One Eye."

After a dozen victorious campaigns in Asia the Cossacks had no illusions about their leaders. They knew that Suvarof had won the victories and Potemkin had taken credit for them; so they said, one to another, that Potemkin was blind in his soul. And they were quite ready to follow Suvarof into the seven gates of a Mohammedan hell.

Potemkin, whatever the folk in Petersburg a thousand miles away might think, was not a soldier. He was a gigantic child of fortune, favorite of the beautiful empress; for through Catharine he ruled Russia and its millions of souls. His was the privilege of life and death, the thumb of a Caesar, the whispered word of a Mogul.

Yet, withal, he was jealous of praise. He had conquered the old empire of the Tatar khans, the Crimea and the steppe of Asia, the Caucasus Mountains, and the uplands of Persia. Now that the sultan of the Turks had proclaimed a holy war against the Christians, he devised a particularly bold move.

With the army he would strike south and east, take Otchakof—the naval base of the

Turks—and move on Constantinople. In the last years the empress had ordered the construction of some twenty frigates in the Dnieper. With these he would destroy Hassan's fleet, and blockade the Bosphorus.

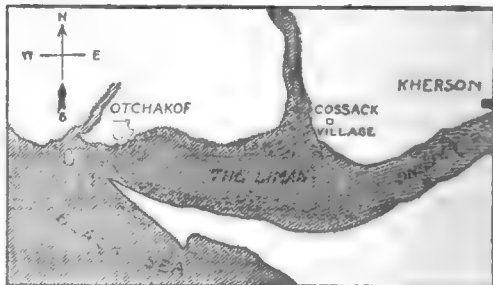
He saw himself another crusader, marching on the walls of Constantinople. He would be master of the Black Sea, the stronghold of Islam for more than a thousand years.

So that spring, fifty thousand men had moved south and east, following the course of the great Dnieper.

Through the Cossack country they went, and that of the Tatar tribes. From the steppe they entered a desert country.

Potemkin had to leave strong detachments to guard his communications. The stores of food were beginning to dwindle, and they had none too much powder. He had not foreseen all this.

They pushed on, down a narrowing strip of land between the river Boug and the Dnieper, and came to a halt, perforce. Here



the Dnieper ran into a long estuary, called the Liman, and ahead of them was the Boug curving into the Liman.

Otchakof lay at the narrow mouth of the Liman across the Boug, and Hassan's flotilla of smaller vessels patrolled the two-mile stretch of water.

Meanwhile came rumors of the invasion of Hungary on their flank by another Turkish army, and stories of unrest among the Mohammedan tribes in their rear.

Potemkin, had not made allowance for the spread of the *jehad*—the holy war—to the tribes. The position of his army was critical and no reinforcements were arriving from the north. He was indifferent to the lack of meat, because wild duck and partridges were shot for his table; his wines were cooled in ice brought from five hundred miles away at the cost of men's lives

"If the men growl for meat," he said irritably to Colonel Popoff, his chief of staff, "let them take fish out of the Dnieper."

Nevertheless, he decided to hold a conference with his officers. He had just completed a rambling wooden palace in Kherson, seventy miles from the front. A dozen regiments had worked in shifts to build it in the waste of sand overlooking the river. In this, his headquarters, he gave a fête. Women had been brought from Kief to make it lively, and Potemkin ordered that they be attired as natives of the races he had conquered: Poles, Circassians, Georgians and Tatars.

When the crowds around the faro tables and the musicians were greatest, Potemkin appeared for the first time. He entered the brilliant assemblage of his court, dressed—to gratify a new whim—in a monk's coarse robe and sandals. At midnight Popoff announced that the council would be held, and ushered the general officers into a room where breakfast was spread—a breakfast of game and hot, spiced wines—and in the center of the table a map of the Liman was held in place by gold candlesticks.

Potemkin, with the lives of fifty thousand men hanging in the balance, could not resist playing the actor—harlequin on a stage set for death.

 HE LISTENED moodily to the debate among his officers, who were not agreed. Benningsen was for abandoning their position on the Liman as too dangerous. Kutusof—who twenty years later halted Napoleon and the Grand Army at Borodino—maintained that it would be disastrous to retreat before the Moslems.

The Prince de Ligne, a noted diplomat, was all for holding fast where they were until the fleet, now under command of Vice-Admiral John Paul Jones, could drive Hassan out of the Liman and blockade the city from the sea.

Potemkin asked his favorite, the Prussian prince, Nassau-Siegen for an opinion, since he was the only officer present from the fleet. The other officers looked at him curiously, for Nassau had expected to be given the command of the fleet instead of Jones. He had the rank of rear-admiral, and the flotilla of gunboats was under his orders, while Jones led the battle squadron.

"With your Highness' gracious permission," observed Nassau, "I beg to point out

that the masterly and far-sighted instructions given by your Highness to Monsieur le Chevalier Jones should be carried out."

Potemkin's one eye closed and opened expectantly. He had given no orders to the new admiral, but he had an ear for flattery.

"The squadron should proceed at once to engage Hassan's fleet, as you desire," Nassau went on, weighing the effect of his words on the man in the monk's robe. "At once! The Mohammedan fleet is the radical of the operations. As soon as it is removed——"

He went on to propose various stratagems, while the Prince de Ligne took snuff and Potemkin listened, frowning. The prince marshal disliked giving open-and-shut orders. For one thing, he did not know how. When things went well he could take the credit, when mishaps occurred the blame was fastened on some subordinate.

"By your leave, gentlemen—" de Ligne raised two slender fingers and brushed daintily at the lace of his wristband—"may a man of letters who is not of either service inquire how our admiral can be expected to defeat the Turkish squadron, which is half again more powerful than his? I understand that frigates have been brought to Otchakof from the Barbary bashaws."

"If I were in sole command—" began Nassau, his voice rising.

"Unfortunately," murmured de Ligne, "the situation is otherwise. Monsieur le Chevalier is admiral. May I ask, Nassau, what he is doing to help matters?"

The full lips of the Prussian smiled.

"*Foi d'un gentilhomme*, the merchant reverts to his trade. Paul Jones, my lord, is laboring like a peasant fitting new rigging and drilling his crews at battery practise."

"But why?" De Ligne knew even less than Nassau or Potemkin of ships.

"He was once a merchant, and he was born a Scottish fisherman's——"

"If you will permit me, his birth does not at present engage our attention, but his actions. Is he preparing to attack Hassan?"

"No!" Nassau almost shouted, his full face, pitted by smallpox, flushing. "He has no heart for that. He complains that he finds the squadron unseaworthy—impossible to sail against the wind—and that no charts have been made of the Liman, which is full of shoals. He said the —— himself must have been in command of that squadron."



Potemkin frowned, annoyed. A certain officer of his, the Brigadier Alexiano, a Greek had been in charge of the new squadron, and was now flag captain.

"Gentlemen," observed stout Kutusof in his slow, heavy voice, "I have studied the defenses of Otchakof from the far bank of the estuary. The old line of water batteries has been strengthened. Hassan has built a strong fortress on the hill. Its guns command the channel entrance and the anchorage of Hassan's fleet.

He glanced around inquiringly.

"How is it possible for the admiral to give battle to a stronger fleet under the guns of a fort?"

Potemkin drained his glass and leaned forward.

"We have not heard the opinion of Suvarof."

At the far end of the table a slender, stoop-shouldered Russian had been sitting, hands clasped over the hilt of a sword that was shaped like a simitar. The hilt was gold, set with diamonds and sapphires and chased in the blade was the legend: *For the conquest of Asia*. This was old Suvarof's sword of honor, bestowed years since by Catharine and he always wore it.

His chin had been rested on his hands and in the dim light the others had not seen that he was asleep. Suvarof had led Cossacks against some Turkish *spahis* two days ago, and that day he had come seventy miles on horseback. He was tired and he disliked councils of war.

"Your Highness," he replied, aroused by mention of his name, and alert at once, "was pleased to ask——"

"A plan—*mordieu*, we must agree on a plan!"

Suvarof glanced at the clock against the wall and sighed. His pleasant and rather plain face, lined and weather-beaten, was notable for a pair of clear brown eyes.

"Plans don't amount to anything," he said after a while. "Things happen differently in a battle."

De Ligne passed his snuff-box under his nostrils with a half smile. Nassau, who had been talking for an hour, chewed his lip, remembering that Suvarof was not one of the grandees of the empire, having risen from the ranks nearly half a century ago.

"Then do you desire a retreat?" asked Potemkin, knowing that this would strike fire.

One of Suvarof's maxims was that it was better always to go after the enemy than to retire.

The old general was a man of few words. He laid his sword in its scabbard on the table in front of him, shoving the map away impatiently. Then he clasped his fists, placing one on each side of the sword. Then he looked at Potemkin.

Every one was watching him, knowing that Suvarof's word would decide the matter.

"Your Highness, we can't go back. So we must go forward. The Boug estuary holds us." With a nod he indicated the scabbard and lifted one fist placing it on the other. "Clear away Hassan's vessels for ten hours and my Cossacks will be across. Enough said for a soldier who knows nothing of seamanship."

"But how will Hassan's fleet be disposed of?"

"That is Jones' affair. Ask him."

Argument followed, voices were raised and Potemkin, falling into one of his black rages, struck an officer in the face. Champagne was brought in and then vodka, and more than a few were drunk. Suvarof said nothing more, but listened without going to sleep again.

Popoff had drawn his rapier, to beat on the table, and began to make passes at the frightened servants who approached the table to pour the wine.

"A hit—a hit!" he cried triumphantly, as he thrust a lackey in the calf.

Nassau, swaying in his chair, applauded.

"Go you one better, Colonel—curse me if I won't. Have in a girl to dance on the table."

"Lay you odds, Popoff," put in another, "you can't pink her in the legs."

"Done with you, *kunak!* Ten crowns!"

De Ligne, his lined face colorless as his powdered wig, rose from his place and stepped behind Potemkin's chair to whisper to the prince. Potemkin who had been brooding over his glass nodded and waved the diplomat away.

Signing to Suvarof to follow, de Ligne went to one of the doors where they could talk without being overheard.

"Permit me to ask, *mon general*; is our situation dangerous?"

Suvarof nodded.

"Ah. His Highness is pleased to give you full discretion. Act as you see fit, but have

an understanding with the American at once. He must work with you. Can you reach him tomorrow——"

"I am going to his ship now."

The heavy eyes of the diplomat studied the old general with some curiosity.

"I make you my congratulation, Prince. Between ourselves, you came with the purpose of gaining a free hand, without disclosing your plan of operations. Pray, did not you desire this conference with the admiral?"

Suvarof's brown eyes met his stare without surprize or amusement.

"My dear de Ligne, would it not be better if Jones also had an undivided command?"

The diplomat raised his brows, and did not reflect until afterward that he had not been answered.

"How do you mean?"

"He was promised full authority, but he must act with Nassau and Alexiano, it seems."

"But you have not known this American a week. How——"

"I know Nassau and Alexiano," said the general dryly. "And Paul Jones is my friend."

De Ligne smiled and shook his head.

"Impossible!" He hesitated a moment. "Nassau is favored in a high quarter—in Tsarkoe-seloe." His lips formed the word, "The empress."

A shout of laughter from the table interrupted them. A Circassian girl was dancing unveiled on the map spread between the candles, her bare toes touching in turn the goblets of the officers without upsetting them. Popoff's sword glinted as it thrust at her clumsily.



SUVAROF'S face was grave when he left Paul Jones that evening and rode without sparing himself or his horse to his quarters on the Boug. But he took time to watch the Cossacks rub down the Arab that had carried him on the last leg of his journey. When he was satisfied that they would not give the mare water too quickly he turned to confront a tall man who lounged in the stable door, hands thrust in his belt.

"Ivak, you scoundrel, you are growing fat. I have work to do that will make you lean." From long experience with his men, he was aware that the giant had something to say to him. "What is it?"

The Don Cossack straightened, towering over the slender general. He wore the long black coat and red sash of a cavalry regiment, both more than a little ragged. His saber would have cost a year's pay if he had not plundered it. When he pulled off his sheepskin hat a long scalplock fell over one shoulder.

"Evil tidings, Little Father," he grumbled. "I was riding with the river patrol and we hit upon a village of our folk, with only vultures in it. It must have been a week since the Turks left it."

Ivak had braid on his collar—the mark of a *sotnik*, or captain of a hundred. He was past middle age, and in the widest black eyes and thin, down-curving nose there was a trace of the Eastern blood of the men from the river Don.

"We are collecting all the skiffs and flat-boats along the Boug," he went on moodily, "and others are being built out of the forests as you ordered. The Turks are all on the other side and they keep watch fires going at night."

"Are the gunboats there?"

"Aye. Give me twenty men, and I will cut out——"

"Nay, I have other work for you."

"But the *kunaks*, the brothers are uneasy, Little Father. They are restless because the Turks who laid waste the village have not been followed up. *Ekh*——" he slapped the side of his head—"I was forgetting! The patrol brought in a powder wagon, from the steppe."

"How, from the steppe?"

"It was as I say. They heard a man singing in the darkness and at first they thought it was a trick, and then a wandering ghost. But it was a man named Pietr, a fine fellow, really. I took him to my hut."

"And the wagon?" demanded Suvarof patiently, knowing that the *sotnik* must tell his tale in his own way.

"They heard wheels creaking, and they rode down the party, twelve men from a Petersburg regiment and half as many wounded in the wagon. They were all that were left of a battalion and a supply train. Bashkirs attacked the train, and the twelve had been fighting off other riders armed with bows slung over their left shoulders——"

"Tatars from the Kuban?"

Ivak considered a moment and nodded.

"Aye, Tatars from the Kuban; bad customers. I saw one of their arrows, fixed in the wagon."

"Do you think the tribes have mounted for war?"

"Aye, they have tasted blood. Out on the steppe the wolves are hunting in packs and the vultures are dropping lower." Yesterday I saw a rider from the Krim, down in the rushes of the river, looking at our outposts. I fired at him with my musket, but he was off like a flash—the weasel!"

The lines in the general's forehead deepened, and he stepped to the horse, picking up each hoof in turn to inspect it. The Arab thrust its lean, veined head against his shoulder, and he rubbed his fingers behind its ears absently. He moved stiffly because the ride had been a hard one, and old wounds irked him.

"Do you think the tribes are moving from the Krim?" he asked.

The *sotnik* shook his head.

"No, Father. This was a spy."

Suvarof understood that Ivak meant the Tatars of the Crimea were sending out scouts to find out how matters stood on the Liman. If the Krim Tatars took the field, the Russians would have small chance of fighting their way back along the Dnieper.

They were cut off. They must cross the estuary of the Boug, smash Hassan's army, take Otchakof. With the river between them and the tribes, who would hang back if Hassan was defeated, they would have breathing space. They could open up the Dnieper again, and bring in grain, meat and powder by sea from Sebastopol.

"Now," he said, "I will tell you what you must do to help your poor little father, Suvarof."

## CHAPTER V

### THE BLACK FRIGATES

THE crackling of a fire awakened Pierre Pillon, and he sniffed at frying fish. Then he groaned, being all one ache from head to heels, and thirsty beyond imagining. Instead of arriving upon a smiling coast fringed with villages—villages with taverns, and olive groves and grape vines—he was still in the desert. The very earth on which he slept was sand streaked with gray salt.

He grunted, yawned and rose to limp to

the water jug. The fire smoldered in a ring of stones under a hole in the roof of the wattle and clay hut. Ivak knelt beside it watching the fish that sizzled in the pan.

A falcon screamed from his perch, and the Cossack took down a half-plucked crow from a mass of marmot skins and ermines that hung from a Circassian dagger driven into a post. He tied the claws of the crow over the perch, and the falcon proceeded to eat breakfast.

Pierre stared, because in his country hawking was a sport for the nobles. Ivak's hut had other treasures—a pair of soft shagreen boots and a high-peaked Kirghiz saddle covered with silk.

"Sit," growled the Cossack, indicating the saddle, and hacking the salt fish into equal halves. "God has given us bread and salt to eat."

He went to a shelf out of the hawk's reach and drew a plate of barley cakes out of a pile of odds and ends of silver, powder horns, spare flints and finely made fish nets. Whatever the state of the army's commissary, the Cossacks usually managed to fare well.

When Pierre had satisfied his hunger, he looked up.

"*Bien merci*—my thanks to you, Cossack. Now point out the road that leads to the fleet anchored off this coast."

He had turned over the powder wagon with its burden of wounded to an officer of the advance; he had told his story to Ivak. His battalion was wiped out and he did not know where his regiment was. His one thought was to reach Paul Jones' ship, and join the marine guard.

Ivak was studying the big Provençal as a man might eye a promising horse he meant to buy. Going to the pile of sheepskins that were his bed—he had given it to Pierre last night—he put them aside and dug with his hands in the yielding sand, unearthing a stone jug tightly corked.

This he held out to Pierre, who had the cork drawn in a twinkling. The Provençal raised the jug in both hands and let cool red wine run down into his open throat. Ivak watched with interest.

"Allah, you pour out a man's measure!"

He took the jug and duplicated Pierre's drink. Then he produced two short clay pipes and filled them from his tobacco sack. Lighting a twist of hemp in the embers he began to smoke in silence.



"An empty belly and a dry throat lead to short words," the Cossack remarked. "But now we can talk." You say you have served under Paul, the American. Would you aid him, if the chance offered?"

"Only tell me how."

They were talking in the *lingua franca* that both understood, eked out with some Russian. Ivak had more than a little respect for a man who could bring a wagon in safely from the open steppe when the Tatars were raiding. He saw that Pierre did not know that he was an officer; but among the free Cossacks a trooper considered himself as good as his colonel, although discipline was strict.

Thoughtfully he patted the earth between his knees.

"Eh, this is my place; I have never served in the floating batteries. But Father Suvarof has sent me on a mission to the water. I need a *kunak*, a comrade, who understands the trails about a ship. Will you come with me?"

"To the flagship?"

"Aye, so."

Nothing could have suited Pierre better. He cracked his thumbs and grinned in huge delight.

"Come, *allons!* Let us go!"

"You may have your skin slit open. Have you ever hunted from a *lopazik*, Pietr?"

The Provençal shook his head; only the gentry followed the hounds or coursed hares with dogs in his country; a peasant caught poaching would be glad to escape with the loss of his right hand.

"A *lopazik*," Ivak explained, "is a platform built in a tree. You sit in it to watch for game. A calf or goat is staked out beneath the tree at evening and you squat up in the platform until perhaps a tiger comes along in the darkness. Then you keep very quiet and make sure it's really a tiger and not a witch or something evil before letting off your piece. *Okh!* If you're a real huntsman you've sighted between the eyes and the skin is yours; if not the tiger goes off—*ffut!*—frightening the wild geese and stirring up all the forest. Geese always cry out at midnight, but they sound different then. I know all about it."

"Once geese saved a big city," nodded Pierre, to be polite, "by their squawking. It must have been Rouen, or Paris. That was before my time, and besides, I've never hunted."

Ivak shook his head in astonishment.

"Well, Pietr, it is hard to understand. Anyway, you are no green lad with a musket. Now you must go and build a *lopazik*,—" he pointed through the door—"out yonder on the fleet. There are men on the *Vladimir*, Paul Jones' flagship, who would do him a bad turn if they get the chance."

Pierre pricked up his ears at this.

"Aye," went on the Cossack slowly, "I rode with Paul Jones from Petersburg, the city of the empress. Eh, he is a *jight*, not a *moujik*,\* he thinks only of whipping the Turks, as a man should. The Turks have made the red cock crow in our Cossack villages, they have burned our hamlets and driven off our young women for slaves; they have cut off the hands and feet of our priests. Only God knows what they haven't done."

"Before the American came to the fleet, Pietr, there were two in command. A Greek named Alexiano, who has a pouch like a Polish landowner and a Prussian named Nassau-Siegen who has no belly at all. Once the Greek was a Moslem, and men say that he tried his hand with the brethren of the Coast. I do not know. But between them they took many prizes near the Liman, and gained rewards for themselves, beside keeping the plunder. The prizes they took were merchant ships, and of all that loot they gave their crews not a copeck."

Pierre threw out a hand, palm up.

"Name of a sacred dog! I have served in three seas and as many wars. But never have I seen the gun-deck hearties go without their share of prize money when a prize was taken. What kind of birds are these officers?"

"You will see." Ivak spat into the glowing embers. "In their looting they did not find time to sound the Liman, which is full of shoals as a dog of fleas."

"What kind of a sea is this?"

"You will see. Paul made soundings with me, in a skiff at night. We were fired on, but he did not give the word to go back."

"He is a man, that one."

With a wave of his pipe Pierre expressed at once his knowledge of Jones' daring, and his experience of the risks of navigating hostile waters.

\* An outsider—a daring fellow, not a farmer.

Ivak fell into one of his sudden silences, wherein he seemed not to think as much as to dream, like the child of the steppe that he was.

"*Ekh*, a leader of men is Paul," he muttered at last. "Yet—would you turn your back on a tiger, Pietr? Not if you had seen one or smelled it at night. Paul has eyes only for the enemy in front."

"When we rode from the north to the Black Sea," he added slowly, "many times we found all the horses gone from the post stations. River bandits jumped into our path and we beat them off with cold steel. Some one would have kept Paul from his command. Perhaps it was Nassau, perhaps Alexiano; perhaps the Turk, or the — himself. Who knows? *He* is cunning as a woman and full of hate as a trodden adder, and *he* will strike again on the ship. So little Father Suvarof, who knew that I came from Petersburg with Paul, sent for me and bade me seek out the traitor."

"Good!" The big Provençal struck his chest. "*C'est la guerrel* I'll smell out the rogue—I'll open up his hide."

"Nay, if you go about it like that, you will wake up some night with a knife in your liver. The men of the *Vladimir*, the flagship, are wolves; their fangs are long."

His eyes hardened.

"You must play the part of a masterless man; don't let them know you are the American's man. Say that you are a deserter, and don't stop at a brawl."

"Then," Pierre's face fell, "I am not to speak to the admiral if chance serves?"

"Not to him. Keep your ears sharp and tell me what you hear down under the deck where the men are camped. Every evening I will walk by the biggest mast. But don't speak to me unless you have learned something. All the ship knows that Paul and I are *kunaks*."

Pierre felt a twinge of jealousy, but saw the wisdom in the Cossack's plan. Ivak announced that they would set out at once, and proceeded to break camp by burying the jug and taking the hawk to the hut of a fellow officer. He led Pierre to the stables and ordered his horse and two others, picking out a trooper to ride with them to bring the beasts back.

He did not hurry, until his own horse, a black Kirghiz stallion, fresh from a long rest, broke away from the Cossack that held it. Ivak saw it rear and was at its side in

a half dozen swift strides. The stallion tossed its head and wheeled away, but the *solnik* had a hand on the saddle horn. Running beside the horse, he leaped into the saddle.

Finding his stirrups and taking up the reins, he raced the stallion in a wide circle, bringing up in front of the stables, reining in so sharply that its hind hoofs scattered gravel and sand over the onlookers. The Cossacks gave the performance no more than a casual glance, but Pierre looked glum.

"*Bon sang!* I can not sit on a beast like that."

Ivak was utterly astonished when he learned that the Provençal had never ridden a horse. He asked how men got about in France, and learned that the gentry rode in coaches, while the peasants sat on donkeys, if they had them. He thought for a moment and ordered blankets girdled on Pierre's mount instead of a saddle.

"Hold on by the mane," he directed, "and wrap your legs around its barrel—so! Give him a hand up, one of you."

Cossacks strolled over from the barracks to stare at the unusual performance. To them a man who could not ride an artillery cast-off was a marvel.

"*Ekh*, here's a fellow who doesn't like stirrups—see his saddle."

"Nay, it's a new way to carry your bed around."

"Wrong, you simpletons. He's been to Constantinople and raided the sultan's stables. What are you going to do with him, Uncle Ivak?"

Pierre gritted his teeth and held fast. He saw that those troopers who swaggered in weather-stained uniforms, who wore weapons as if born to them, were veterans who knew their own worth, quite different from the recruits of Petersburg.

"Don't cackle before you lay an egg," Ivak remarked at large, not mindful to have his own dignity slighted through his companion. "This *kunak* of mine has laid out more Tatars in the steppe than you would put to grass in a lifetime."

"Well, luck to him," shouted a trooper. "*S'Bogun*—go with God."



SOME hours later they passed the last of the pickets and came out on the shore, where Ivak searched for and found a skiff hidden in the rushes. And Pierre had his first glimpse of the Liman.

They were half way between the Boug estuary and the upper end of the Liman, where the Russian fleet was anchored in a half circle across the wide mouth of the Dnieper.

"Name of a dog," shouted the seaman, "this Liman—it is not the sea! 'Tis a bay!"

He could see the opposite shore, five miles away, a long line of sandy spits. To his right, nearly hidden in the heat haze, the masts of the Moslem fleet were visible. A single glance told him that they had blockaded Jones' squadron in the Liman.

When they came within hailing distance of the Russian line, Pierre rested on his oars, brushing the sweat and the gnats from his eyes. He saw two three-deckers, and counted the guns in the tiers—seventy two. They were in the center of the line. The others were frigates, with a few sloops, eighteen in all.

Black hulls, encrusted with gray salt at the waterline, squat bows and lofty poops set with rows of stern windows that reflected the sun, stumpy masts and short spars, small sails—he did not like the look of all that.

"Dutch belly boats," he muttered, "crank and dull before the wind. They would make no way in the teeth of the wind."

He could see, however, that they carried heavy batteries. Behind the line, at the jetties by the Dnieper mouth, were half a hundred smaller craft, bomb ketches, double shallops and great scows mounting a single long twenty-four or a mortar.

"The flotilla," nodded Ivak, "Nassau's flotilla."

Behind these, a barren shore, nearly white with salt, under the clear sky, as blue as the skies of Provence. He pulled slowly for the *Vladimir*, which he made out by the ensign at the staff over the stern lanterns. Passing under the towering stern with its gilded carving, he looked up at the small gallery. This was called the Admiral's Walk, being sacred from immemorial custom to that personage. No one was there.

Pierre waited until Ivak had gone over the rail. Then he kicked the skiff away and went up eagerly.

By shouted orders and the creak of block and tackle he knew that the gun-deck crews were at battery drill, but on the spar deck men were overhauling rigging, and he halted by the booms to stare around him, filling his nostrils with familiar smells.

A bearded Greek boatswain, wearing green pantaloons spotted with tar and a crimson scarf bound over his head, jostled against him and turned around to curse. Then, surprised by Pierre's bulk and long yellow hair, he growled a question.

"What are you about?"

Pierre began to explain that he had come from the Kherson dockyard, and wanted service with the marines on the *Vladimir*, but the other cut him short with a bellowing laugh.

"Oho-ho! Marines! Do you think this is Toulon? We have no marines and few men who have seen blue water. Have you? Then go below, my bully. You are big enough to pull a rope, and Number Four gun of the port battery lacks a rope-man. Bear a hand my fine lad and you'll have vodka to wet your whistle, before the Turks hack you."

He gave Pierre a push toward the fore skuttle, adding under his breath:

"I know your kind—deserter from the army, looking for a soft berth. No duffle, and a poor account of yourself."

Going below Pierre reported to the gun captain and fell to work with a will.

An hour later he was laughing. It was hotter than the slave benches of a Turkish galley, and the men who flung themselves down beside him when the drill was ended reeked of stale sweat; the tackle of the eighteen pounder that he had been handling was stiff and caught in the blocks. A Syrian boy, half naked, wearing an amulet around his thin throat, had curled up like a dog, falling asleep as if worn out by toil.

Near the gun carriage a group of Tatars squatted without a word, only their eyes moving—fishermen by the smell of them. From the deck above came the shrill pipe of whistles and the patter of naked feet, but around Pierre welled the murmur of polyglot tongues.

A Cossack, who had been leaning against a stanchion picking his teeth, swaggered off, kicking the Syrian out of his way and grinning down when the yellow face snarled up at him. Pushing a Greek swabber from the water butt, he drank in long gulps, paying no attention to the sailor who fingered at his dirk, cursing venomously.

Somewhere a Portuguese was singing. Pierre chuckled, drinking it all in. So these were Ivak's sea wolves! Ten years ago he had been one of such a crew. Except that



no Americans were to be seen, the gun deck of the *Vladimir* might be that of the *Bon Homme Richard* with its motley crew. And, unless Pierre was mistaken, there was a fight in these men.

## CHAPTER VI

### PIERRE MAKES AN ENEMY

"THOSE chaps will stand to their guns," he told Ivak, after quarters that evening, standing by the bole of the mainmast.

There was a new gleam in the Provençal's eyes, a new swing to his shoulders. He had discarded the infantry coat, and the clumsy boots. His garments differed from the rest, because the bulk of the *Vladimir's* crew were drafted from the infantry regiments.

"But on the spar deck," he went on, "they are Greeks——"

Ivak nudged him in the ribs and a man who had been passing forward stopped, to come closer. Dusk was falling—the long twilight of the southern sea—and the newcomer leered into his face.

"Oho, our little cockerel crows! Aye, 'tis our deserter from Kherson. Harken to Dmitri—you've made a bad bargain, you have."

It was the big boatswain of the green pantaloons, who turned to Ivak with something resembling respect.

"Where is his illustriousness, the admiral? He gave orders that men who could handle firelocks were to be told off, and the best of the lot picked for sharpshooters. They are to go to the tops——"

"Where?" asked the Cossack.

Dmitri pointed over his head, to the square platform that was the fighting top, above the main-yard. Ivak surveyed with interest the shadowy antennæ of the shrouds.

"He ain't aft, where the gentry sit at table," grumbled the Greek.

"Yonder is monsieur, the admiral," broke in Pierre. "Only listen, bosun and you'll hear him."

Men who had come up from the stifling 'tween decks were grouped around the foremast. From the group rang out a voice that the Provençal knew well.

"The King sits in Dunfermline toun,  
Drinking the blude-red wine;  
O whaur will I get a skeely skipper  
To sail this gude ship of mine?"

It was an old ballad that Paul Jones must have got by heart from the mariners of Solway Firth when he was a lad, and he watched ships put in to Kircudbright from the American colonies. The men who listened recked not of the words, but the plaintive drift of the ballad appealed to them.

The songs of the steppe like those of the sea held a burden of sorrow, and the Cossacks, who had an ear for harmony, soon caught the air. Rich voices joined the American's deep tenor.

"I saw the new moon late yestreen,  
Wi' the auld moon in her arm;  
And I fear, I fear, my master dear,  
That we shall come to harm!"

Jones was sitting on the breech of a twelve pounder, hatless. Unlike the other officers he wore his hair unpowdered. Ten years had left lines in his swarthy face; his hands were thin, and the flesh had fallen away from his high cheek-bones.

But the quick brown eyes and the lift of the chin had not altered.

"Oh, he's a pretty fellow," grunted the Greek, "and very free with his songs and his double tots of rum, and his airs about discipline. But what will he do when the time comes, and it's 'boarders away'?"

Pierre's temper flared instantly.

"When that time comes, you won't be treading on his heels, by ——. You——"

He checked himself, remembering where he was, and why he had come to the ship. Dmitri put a hand to his hip where a knife was sheathed in his belt. But, glancing at the *sotnik* who was watching them, he stepped back with an oath.

"I'll pay you out! I'll send you to your account!"

Still muttering he hastened forward.

"Half-owre, half-owre to Aberdour,  
'Tis fifty fathoms deep,  
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens  
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet."

Lieutenant Edwards, the English aide and interpreter who had come from Petersburg with Jones, joined in the last verse with a ringing barytone. Then some one produced a *balalaika*.

Ivak grinned at Pierre.

"Watch out for Dmitri; he's a bad one with a knife. Now get down below and keep your tongue between your teeth, if you can."

When the Provençal had gone, Ivak inclined his head critically, listening to the *khoro vod*, thrummed by the guitar and roared out by the deep voices of the Don Cossacks. One youngster sprang into the center of the circle, outlined against the after-gleam of the sunset. Arms akimbo, bare feet striking the deck planks, he began the wild *cosachka*, the dance of the southern steppe.

Squatting on his heels, he leaped up, his coat swirling, and Ivak began to pat the deck in time, thinking of other days when he had danced in the villages on feast days and had broken into the ring of girls, to kiss first one then another.

 THE riding lights of the squadron gleamed brighter as the red streaks faded from the sky. Overhead the yards creaked. For the first time in a week a fresh breeze was coming out of the south, blowing from Otchakof toward the anchored squadron.

Jones, who had been watching the men, with Edwards, rose and went aft to select the new topmen. Whether taking a Russian artilleryman aside to explain by example the mysteries of side tackle and crowbar or showing the gun captains how to quicken their work by stacking round shot in the stands near the gun muzzles, the American was in every drill.

The men grumbled, yet their food had been better since Jones arrived, and they did not grumble overmuch when they saw that he shared in the hard work. He was in everybody's mess and everybody's watch, tying a Turk's-head knot for a clumsy apprentice and making a jest of it to the boat-swain's mate, who would otherwise have kicked the boy around the mast. Or trying out a cutlass with a bearded giant of the Urals who had never been out of his depth in water before except on a horse's back.

Knowing no Russian he could not talk to the men, except through Edwards. But they became accustomed to him and in the end they listened for his voice and took to following him around, only leaving him when he retired to the quarterdeck ladder.

Once alone in his cabin or on the admiral's gallery, he looked worried. He knew that the crew of the *Vladimir* was incapable of handling a vessel at sea. And daily advices came from Potemkin's staff, urging a movement on Otchakof.

Paul Jones answered that such a course would not be for the good of the service, and when opportunity offered he would act.

Potemkin replied—

"You are expected to do your duty courageously or to take the consequences."

Only Edwards knew what it had cost Jones to take this in tight-lipped silence, and to go on cheerfully with the work of preparation, refraining from moving at once on the Turks and throwing away the lives of his men and officers.

Just now he was inspecting the muskets and hand grenades before issuing them to a gunner's mate, to stow in the tops. And he explained to the men who had been told off for duty aloft, the work of topmen, how musketry was to be directed on the gun crews of the enemy's upper deck.

Ivak listened attentively and peered up at the shadowy bole of the mast. Finally he became restless and spoke to Edwards.

"Will Paul give permission for me to go to that platform, if there is a battle?"

"Can you handle a musket?"

"I can drop a wild pig in a thicket a hundred paces away."

Edwards smiled and turned to the American, who had a warm regard for the old Cossack.

"Eh, Ivak," Paul Jones asked, "why do you want to go aloft?"

"That up there is a *lopazik*," Ivak pointed to the fighting top. "'Tis a hunter's rest in a tree, and it should be easy to see game from such a high place."

When this was interpreted to him, Jones laughed.

"Very well, Ivak. But you will find that tree more hazardous than the ground down here."

"Will the admiral allow me to take also a *kunak* who was once a sergeant of marines on French ships?"

"Faith, if there is a marine sergeant on the *Vladimir* he belongs in the main-top."



THAT night the wind freshened, whining in the stays of the anchored vessels, Pierre had the second watch on deck. He leaned on the preventer tackle of an eighteen pounder, staring out of the open port, listening to the wash against the ship's side.

It was becoming clear to him that neither he nor Ivak were cut out for scouts.

If there was plotting on the *Vladimir* they could not hit upon a trace of it.

He turned his head just a little, eying the shadows cast by the lantern at the mast. Then he swung around, his back against the bulwarks. Dmitri had been walking past the booms, and had stepped toward the eighteen-pounder, his bare feet noiseless on the deck.

For a moment they faced each other, the Greek grinning in his beard, Pierre watchful, his arms folded on his chest.

"*Sant' Nicolò!*" grunted the boatswain. "You have good ears, even for a spy."

Pierre, remembering Evak's advice, kept silent. He could see that Alexiano was on the poop, in talk with another officer. Most of the men of the watch were asleep, out of sight; no one paid any attention to the boatswain and his victim.

Dmitri brushed a hand across his throat, under his oiled beard. He had puffy, good-natured eyes and smelled of scent and wine.

"You are looking for your friends of the after-guard, eh? They won't trouble about you, after you're down with the fish."

By now Pierre had seen enough of the Russian service to be aware that if he answered the Greek back or struck him, Dmitri would knife him and go free, if the man was in favor with an officer.

"You come," went on the boatswain, "you ask questions, you whisper to that *sotnik*. You are to be topman, by the — horns! Aye, Kherson is lousy with spies and they picked you off to keep an eye on us."

Pierre let his hands rest on his belt, and leaned forward a little.

"With your fine ways and your French gab," hissed Dmitri, "the grandees thought you would fool us bullies. But I have been to Kherson, with his excellency, Alexiano. In the bazaar I heard talk. *When the wind is off the sea the Russians will be torn to pieces by Hassan's sea wolves.* And that is true talk. Some of the men did not come back to the ships."

"Who said that?" Pierre was beginning to be puzzled.

"Who sent the wind? *Sukita fi adhimin* — bite your thumbs for wo, you dog! Nay, Kalil, that wench out of Otchakof had visited the bazaar. But it is truth. I came back, yet we be as good as dead men."

Dmitri stepped nearer, his breath hot on the Provençal's throat.

"The Turks will be upon us with this wind. What chance have these ships against them?"

"Don't stir up your bile," Pierre growled. "Hold hard. Who do you think I serve?"

"The *boyars* who sent us here, to have our throats cut."

"——'s thunder! I'm Paul Jones' man!"

"A lie!"

Dmitri threw back his head, and glanced at the poop. Down the Liman a cannon had rumbled.

The Greek hesitated, then crouched suddenly, whipping out his dirk. Pierre swung his fist into the other's face, sending him back half a dozen paces. Dmitri snarled into his beard and shifted the knife in his hand, to throw it. Then he looked up and lowered his arm slowly.

Alexiano, flag captain of the fleet, was running along the poop railing, shouting that the Turks were bearing down on them. Pierre did not understand what he said, but it was evident that the man was thoroughly scared. Dmitri was staring at his countryman in astonished contempt of such behavior.

There came a long hail from the mast-head, and a second shot down the estuary. After a moment drums beat to quarters and the boatswain thrust his knife back in its sheath. Alexiano was still vociferating, and Russian officers in every sort of uniform ran out of the ward-room to the quarter-deck, some still the worse for wine.

"*Moujiks*—that's what they are, gentry and all!" Dmitri spat on the deck and jumped to the wheel. "Here, you dog—bear a hand."

Pierre joined him and helped with the lashings, listening the while to the muttering groups that surged around the mainmast and the skuttles. Here and there he heard petty officers swearing, and the impact of a blow. A half-naked Syrian stumbled over a lantern on the deck and howled when he fell headlong.

"Fools!" said Pierre from the depths of his heart.

Taken by surprise, with the ship at anchor—aroused from the deep sleep of the hours after midnight, and startled by Alexiano's mad bellow—speaking no common tongue, and the most of them landsmen, it was natural enough that the men of the *Vladimir* should be out of hand.

Hassan of Algiers had closed the jaws of the trap upon them.



From under the poop lantern Ivak emerged completely clad and looking pleased with events. He grinned when he saw Pierre with one eye on Dmitri who had had worse chances and less provocation than this to use a knife on an enemy.

"Com ealong, Pietr, show me the way to the *lopazik*. I have leave to go there. I'll take you."

"Well, in an hour we'll all be eating breakfast in purgatory, off the leaving of the saints' table above."

Dmitri grinned and rolled off to launch himself into the noisiest group in the waist, sending men to right and left, calling them unmentionable names.

While they waited for the topmen who had gathered at the after companion, Ivak explained that Dmitri was a former pirate of the Dnieper, a first-class pilot, who would fight for his bread and salt and was worth a dozen men.

Pierre jumped to the bulwarks, running up the ratlines, and deriving some satisfaction from watching Ivak, who wore boots, laboring in the shrouds with a musket and powderhorn.

When they stood in the main-top, under the clewed-up topsail, he heard a voice give an order through a trumpet from the poop rail.

*"The admiral will pistol any man not found at his place."*

By degrees quiet was restored, and Pierre saw—now that the battle lanterns were lighted—boys bringing up powder, and the crews gathering around the guns on the spar deck. Looking over the rail he could make out Jonse at intervals, going quietly around the ship, exchanging a word or two with the gun captains.

Meanwhile Ivak had sighted the Turks. The keen eyes of the Cossack, accustomed to the murk of starlight, had picked out the blur of sails that showed well down the Liman. No more shots were fired and after an hour Pierre wondered why the Turks had come no nearer. The wind had hauled steadily to the northeast, so that the Turks no longer had it over the stern.

Dawn revealed the reason why the Turks had held back. The largest ship, that of Hassan himself, which was headed for the *Vladimir* had run aground on a shoal. Several feluccas were endeavoring to get the three-decker off, and the rest of the fleet was standing by.

## CHAPTER VII

*When the fat grow lean, the lean must die; when the leaders of the herd falter and look to right and left, the weakest fall by the wayside.*—KIRGHIZ PROVERB.

THE efforts of the Turks to work the flagship off the shoal were hindered by the wind. An hour after sunrise it had hauled to the north-northeast.

Jones waited, watching through his glass, the confused movements of the Moslems, and paying no attention to the advice of Alexiano to draw his ships back into the river behind them while the wind still permitted.

The mishap to Hassan was a bit of luck; the change in the wind was another. Paul Jones made the most of both, unexpectedly. He ordered two signals set. One was for his squadron to advance, line abreast and engage the enemy. The other was for Nassau's flotilla to follow.

The *Vladimir* raised its anchor and made sail, after a fashion. Under top and fore-sails, the line of black vessels stood down the Liman, white water showing under the clumsy bows. Because the foreign ship-captains knew their business; because Jones himself had charted the course of the channel, and mainly because even untried Russian seamen can not go far wrong with a fair wind dead astern, none of the vessels fouled and none grounded, although at times muddy water was to be seen around the hulls. The line was ragged, as seen from the poop of the *Vladimir*; but the Moslems on their hundred and twenty-odd vessels could not know the weakness of the Russian squadron.

A puff of smoke showed on the bows of Hassan's ship-of-the-line, and rolled to leeward. White smoke, pierced by the orange flashes of the guns, poured over the water in front of the accompanying frigates.

Jones set a course that would take him between the stranded vessel and the second largest of the Turks, and held his fire, Alexiano arguing fiercely against both courses.

Something whined overhead—clattered—and white splinters dropped on the poop deck. A block and tackle thumped down by the quartermaster at the wheel, who glanced at it and up at the sails. Then he spat on the deck, and planted his feet.

A rumble as of a laden cart going over a bridge came from somewhere in front of the *Vladimir*. The first broadside struck them.

White fragments whirled from the bole of the foremast, splinters that rose and fell like spray. A gun carriage slewed around, dismounted. Those who remained standing among the gun crew turned to stare at their mates who sat and writhed on the deck.

A red-cheeked infantryman held out his right arm as if it was something he had never seen before. Blood, from veins slashed open spattered on his feet. Dmitri ordered the survivors to carry the wounded below, and bellowed for a lad to empty a box of sand over the growing wetness on the white deck.

The man with the slashed forearm did not seem to know what to do.

"Down with ye to the pit, little brother," grinned Dmitri. "Others will see a deeper pit before this sun sets."

He glanced up at the sunlight, full on the bellying sails, and a man laughed. Others swore, fidgeting in their places. Another broadside whined and rattled overhead and they ducked falling gear.

"Too high!" called out Dmitri. "We aren't up with the angels yet."

Then the roar of the maindeck guns, that made the planks leap under their bare feet, snapped the inertia of the men. Smoke swirled up and around them and the side tackle men who were nearest the ports peered out to see the result. They began to shout hoarsely because they could see where hits had been made. Jones had waited until even unskilled gunners could do execution.

This was necessary, too, because, among the treacherous shoals he could not wear ship—to bring first one broadside then the other to bear. So he headed in between the largest of the Turks, more slowly now because the wind began to fail.

For a few moments his ships were targets for a destructive fire. The Turks served their guns rapidly. Many of the Moslems had dropped anchor to keep from running aground, and were in a position to rake the Russians as the latter came up, sluggish in the light wind. And now the flotilla of Hassan—a hundred odd feluccas and zebecs in the shallows of the far bank—opened up with heavy forty-two pounders and mortars.

Being out of range of the lighter guns of the Russian squadron, they could fire at leisure, and the effect of their fire was visible.

Through the cloud of rolling smoke that hemmed in the lower decks of the *Vladimir*

the masts of the frigate alongside were seen to list sharply. This vessel, the *Little Alexander*, had been hit several times between wind and water, and was sinking. Another, a bark near the end of the line had been dismasted and was drifting down on the Turks. Above the growl of the guns the men on the *Vladimir* could hear a roaring that was like the muttering sigh of surf on a rocky shore. This was the ululation of the Moslems.

"Allah akbar—allah, il-allah!"

To Pierre Pillon and Ivak, who were leaning on the rail of the main-top, waiting for the time when they could use their muskets, this shout was familiar. They looked at each other gravely, and Ivak bent his head to Pierre's ear.

"The decks of those ships are crowded with men. I can see the coats of Osmanli infantry. They have more than we—twice as many. Will Paul try to board them, do you think?"

"We will see."

The Provençal turned away to caution the others not to fire until they could bring down a man with a bullet.

Although a boatswain's mate had been placed in charge of the half dozen in the fighting top, no one except Pierre knew what was expected of them, and as men will when life is at stake and decisions must be made, they began to listen to Pierre, those who understood his lingua franca explaining to the others.

He wrapped the netting they found lying on the platform about the rail, to check flying splinters. He stacked the grenades near the mast and told off the quietest of the lot to hold the lighted linstock, waving it gently so the flame would not go out, against the time when the fuses of the grenades were to be ignited.

A faint hail from the quarterdeck reached their ears, and was repeated, while the Russians stared blankly at Pierre, who had not understood.

"Ahoy the main-top!" Dmitri's stentorian voice clove through the uproar. "By the eyes of —, are ye all dead in the tops? The admiral asks whether ye can see our flotilla, and tell him its position."

The pall of smoke below them hid their surroundings, but Pierre climbed over the rail and dropped to the mainyard.

"Aye, aye!" He went out to the end and came back to shout down at the boatswain. "The flotilla lags behind, half a league."

Nassau's boats, instead of following up and engaging the Turk's flotilla, were making little way, obviously hanging back. For a moment Pierre stared down at the deck. Paul Jones was standing at the break of the poop, watching the *Little Alexander* through his glass. For a while Pierre searched for Alexiano in vain.

Then he saw him run out from the main cabin to the wheel. Cupping his hands the Greek gave a command that Pierre did not catch. It was obviously in Russian because the sailors on the fore-deck shouted a response and in a moment Pierre saw the anchor, loosed from the cat-heads, drop into the water.

"Bon sang!"

It was quite clear to the Provençal, that Alexiano had given the order to let go the anchor on his own initiative. Equally clear that Jones could not have understood the order.

But in another second the American turned his head and ran to the side. He had seen or heard the cable going out. Striding to the break of the poop he shouted a question at Alexiano, who shrugged bulky shoulders as if absolving himself from all blame.

What Paul Jones said then no one else heard, but Alexiano flinched as if hit by a bullet, and the admiral shouted through the trumpet to man the braces, Edwards interpreting as soon as the words were out of his mouth.

"What is happening?" asked Ivak, who was fiddling with the flint in his musket.

Pierre's answering gesture took in the whole ship.

"Hold fast and watch out aloft," he warned.

The *Vladimir's* snub bow was coming around more and more quickly. The men below braced the maintopsail back in time. The whole mast swayed, and the mizzen-topyard came down with a splintering crash. There was a ripping of planks on the fore-deck as the cable ran to its end, snapping off a cat-head and part of the rail.

The great ship swung to her anchor within pistol shot of the two Turkish vessels.

For a moment there was a lull as the guns on all three ships were trained anew.

"That *sacré enfant du* —, Alexiano has put us in irons!" cried the Provençal. "And the good God knows we will never get way on us again."

With the sand bar on which the three-decker of Hassan was stranded and the two ships hemming them in, with the wind now light and baffling, with their anchor down, they were as good as dismasted. The sailing qualities of the *Vladimir* were poor under the best conditions.

"Nay," the Cossack grunted, "the man is no more than a coward. He has arranged matters so we will not board the Moslems. *Ekh*, what now?"

Anew, the diapason of the guns roared below them. A shrill whining filled the air. Pierre coughed as the powder fumes got into his lungs, and leveled his weapon at the throngs of men that swarmed on the deck of Hassan's ship.

 SMOKE formed a swirling pall around them, out of which thrust the masts and sails. The firing quickened into a steady roar.

Whatever their failings, the ships that had followed the *Vladimir* into action stood to their guns. It was Pierre who first noticed that the starboard battery had ceased firing. After peering down a moment, he pulled his men away from that side of the fighting top.

"The big ship has struck its flag!" he shouted gleefully.

The guns of Hassan's three-decker no longer flashed and smoked. Its foremast had fallen, bringing with it the mainyard, and its hull was scarred and rent open. The other three-decker, anchored off the *Vladimir's* larboard quarter was now confronted by two Russian vessels, and, seeing that Hassan had surrendered, slipped its cable.

Slowly its head came around, as the wind filled its sails.

"What now?" asked Ivak, ramming home a charge in his musket.

"Pick off the men at that wheel!" exclaimed Pierre.

Taking careful aim he fired, and saw the half-naked seaman who had been turning over the great wheel stagger and raise a hand to his shoulder. Another ran to take his place, and the three-decker slid away from them.

The sharpshooters in the mizzen top of the *Vladimir* were following Pierre's example, but without his success. Ivak, who had finished loading, thrust the men away from in front of him and raised his piece slowly, lowered it as smoke drifted in front



of him and sighted again, without taking a rest on the rail.

He pressed the trigger, and Pierre saw the Moslem helmsman drop to the planks. Confusion reigned on the crowded deck, and for a moment no one came to take the wheel. The great ship drifted away from them, until the *Vladimir's* guns no longer could be brought to bear on it.

Then it stopped suddenly, spars quivering. The masts listed, until the tiers of guns pointed skyward and at the surface of the water. Pierre, watching, saw its flag come down, and knew that it was fast aground on one of the shoals that fringed the channel of the Liman.

"What now?" asked Ivak, who had loaded again, and was looking around for something to shoot at.

For several moments Pierre did not answer. The firing was dwindling near the *Vladimir* and the smoke had cleared away. The main squadron of the Turks, disheartened by the surrender of the flagship, had lost all formation. At least three frigates, trying to flee, had run aground. Two others were sinking, and the rest were making all efforts to escape down the Liman.

Jones had taken instant advantage of the turn in the tide of affairs, and signaled Fanshawe, who was in command of four frigates on the left of his line, to head down the Liman and head off the Turks at the narrow entrance.

Fearing now that they would be cut off, the remaining Turks were in utter disorder. Only the strong flotilla, in the shallows where Jones' ships could not penetrate, were keeping up a steady fire.

"Good!" exclaimed Pierre, grinning at Ivak. "You see what you have done. Behold, that three-decker has surrendered."

He spoke lightly, but Ivak was palpably astonished, glancing from his musket to the great ship. Then he set down his gun, and took out pipe and tobacco sack from his girdle. Filling the bowl, he seized the still burning linstock and got a light from it.

"By the horns of the uncrowned one!" he muttered. "We had some sport from our *lopazik* after all. But to my mind a tiger has a lot more fight in him than that thing yonder."

After pondering this a while he went back to the bole of the mast and sat down, spreading his legs out at a comfortable angle and looking up at Pierre speculatively.

"If this is a battle of ships," he observed, "it is no more than a dog fight. The dogs snarl and yelp and the fur flies. Then they go off and lick their ribs, and that's the end of it."

But Ivak had not yet seen the end of this.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NASSAU BEARS A HAND

A HAZE of powder smoke and heat overhung the Liman. Through this mark the cyclopean eye of the sun glared on battered ships, and men that toiled unceasingly. In the weed- and wreckage-strewn water, this eye of the sun marked a glowing path as it sank to rest.

And through the haze slipped a white winged thing, as a gull, circling among clouds, flashes into a ray of light.

It came up swiftly on a long slant toward the smoking wreck of the stranded Turkish flagship. The men in the main top of the *Vladimir* identified it as an Algerian sailing galley; its rake and shear, twin lateen sails and high poop with gilded and carved woodwork were unmistakable, even if it had not carried the green flag with a silver crescent at the mast head.

"The galley of the captain-pasha," Ivak pronounced. "Hassan keeps his sea wolves aboard it."

They watched it pass under the far rail of the Turkish three-decker, losing way as its sails were blanketed by the mass of the line-of-battle ship. Then they saw several men jump from the waist of the larger vessel to the high poop of the galley. At once the Algerians headed away, keeping the three-decker between them and the guns of the *Vladimir*.

"Smartly done," assented Pierre. "There's a sting in those hornets yet."

He could make out men in white and red cloaks who wore turbans different from the peaked headgear of the Turks. They crowded around one powerful figure in yellow. A simitar was drawn and waved defiantly at the Russians, who were beyond musket shot.

"Aye," nodded Ivak, puckering his brows. "It is in my mind that Hassan escaped on that vessel. I will climb down from this tree and tell Paul what we have seen."

It was no easy matter to go down the

damaged ratlines, but he made the deck. He stepped over a great rent in the planking, and, circling a group at work, getting a gun back on its carriage with crowbars and tackle, bumped into Dmitri who was swinging an ax at the wreckage of the mizzen top-yard.

In its fall this had smashed the wheel, putting the *Vladimir* out of commission for at least a few hours.

Dmitri turned with a barbed oath that changed to a grin when he saw the Cossack.

"Out of the way, Uncle. This is not your place."

"Where is Little Father Paul? What is Alexiano doing?"

By way of answer Dmitri pointed with the ax. The Greek flag-captain was standing by the gangway head, waiting until a boat could take him off to a felucca that had come up when the firing stopped. Ivak watched until he saw Alexiano go over the rail of the little vessel and the felucca stood off to the other side of the Liman. Then he touched Dmitri's shoulder.

"Tell me, Pantaloons, is that big buffalo in the boat with one sail going to give chase to Hassan's galley?"

"Not he! His excellency—" and he snarled scornfully—"was sent by Paul to bring up the flotilla. By the holy name-days, was Hassan's galley about here?"

Ivak explained what they had seen from the main-top.

"Rare prize money escaped us then," Dmitri muttered. "'Tis said the cabins of the pasha are plated with gold. Paul is below in the steerage, fitting a spare tiller to the rudder stem."

As he made his way below Ivak reflected that Alexiano was where he could do no more harm for the time being. He found Paul Jones with his coat off, helping some sailors rigging give-and-take tackle, to steer by hand. Through the interpreter, the Cossack made his report, and Jones looked up with a smile—in good spirits as always when there was action in view.

"Gentlemen, we have not done with the captain-pasha. Ivak, did you have good hunting from your *lopasik*?"

Near at hand heavy guns boomed, and the sailors glanced at the American questioningly. Motioning them to continue their work, Paul Jones started for the upper deck without waiting to put on his coat. When Ivak and the Englishman gained the

poop ladder, they found him standing at the rail, his swarthy face tense.

All around them barges and squat sloops were pressing forward slowly, firing on the stranded Turks. Ivak saw the mortar on a bomb ketch flare, and watched a flaming shell describe an arc, crashing into the waist of the dismasted three-decker.

He heard a faint outcry, following the explosion of the bomb; but the Turks made no effort to answer this new attack, being unable to bring what guns remained serviceable to bear on the gunboats, or perhaps accepting with the resignation of their race the kismet that was in store for them. Ivak had heard it said that the Russian flotilla under Nassau-Siegen had come up at last, and instead of engaging the Turkish gunboats, was destroying the ships that had already surrendered.

"If they had arrived an hour earlier," grumbled the Englishman, Edwards, "we would have accounted for all Hassan's squadron, instead of half. Nine frigates got by Fanshawe and put to sea."



ROWED by fifty sweeps, a long barge was approaching the *Vladimir*. Its prow bore an enormous bronze eagle; its stern was roofed over with timbers carved and gilded. Under this was a space where a half dozen men sat. At one time this barge had carried the empress upon an inspection of the new fleet. Now it was devoted to the use of Nassau who sat on a divan, nursing a sword between his knees.

"*Monsieur le Prince*," Jones hailed in his clear voice as soon as the barge was within hearing, "those ships have struck. They are our prizes."

Nassau stood up to watch the firing.

"Is it to me you are speaking?" he shouted. "Did you think that quarter was to be given to the Moslems?"

"Aye—why not?"

"The orders of his Highness, Prince Potemkin, were that no quarter should be given and no prizes taken," responded Nassau at last.

"No such orders reached me. These vessels can be floated off, with a change of wind. They would be invaluable to the fleet."

"My dear Chevalier, I am no merchant to figure the profit of salvage."

Nassau smiled at his own quip—for it

was generally believed among the Russians that Paul Jones had been a merchant.

Though he kept his voice under control, Jones was growing angrier. "*Monsieur le Prince*, this is a wanton waste of human life and property. If you will——"

"Death of my life! Once again I remind you that I have secret orders from his Highness himself. He does not wish this *canaille*——" Nassau waved his hand at the men peering from gun port and bulwarks on the flagship—"these mongrels to get the foolish notion of prize money into their heads."

He was speaking French and only a handful of officers understood. But Jones instantly resented the slight to his men.

"The men and officers of my command have been under a hot fire for six hours and they have borne themselves well—a circumstance, *Monsieur le Prince*, that you have not been in a position to observe."

Nassau's full face turned a shade darker, and the Englishman, Edwards, nearly choked in the effort to suppress a chuckle.

But Jones was intent on the need for action while the daylight lasted.

"Nassau," he continued, "we are wasting time. Will you order a division of your gunboats to engage the remaining vessels of the Turks' flotilla?"

"It is too late, my dear Chevalier, to make good the mistake of the squadron. You have let Hassan escape. He and his galley, which is moored under the Otchakof batteries by now, are worth half the Turkish fleet."

Jones listened in frank astonishment. The *Vladimir* had done everything possible under the circumstances to close with Hassan's ship. It was the first time that he had encountered the ignorance and undisguised insolence of those who were close to the throne of the empress.

"You, my Admiral," went on Nassau, as if weighing his words, "will be called to account for failure to act courageously."

For a full moment Paul Jones was silent, the muscles tightening on his jaw, his fingers fastened on the rail. Edwards glanced at him and laid a hand on his arm, whispering that the prince must be trying to trick the man who held the post he desired into a statement that could be turned to account later.

"It is not so," Jones said under his breath, and then clearly. "*Monsieur le*

*Prince*, my men will cut out the galley of the pasha before dawn. It will then be for his Highness to judge if we have acted courageously."

Nassau shrugged. He knew as well as Edwards and the other listeners that the surviving vessels of the Turks were gathering at Otchakof, under the guns of the strong water-batteries, and within range of the new fort on the hill. To his mind, to attempt to cut out the galley of Hassan would be simple madness. The Moslems would be swarming around it like angry bees.

"A promise——" he began.

"I have given you my word."

By degrees it became clear to the listeners that the American meant what he said. Nassau started to speak, thought better of it and took snuff instead. The pause that followed was broken by a shattering roar.

The *Vladimir* quivered and rolled, and men who had been flung to the deck got to their feet and ducked a rain of débris. The Turkish flagship with all on board had blown up when one of the shells from the gunboats reached its magazine. Only its lower ribs blazed in a rolling cloud of smoke.

At once the barge bearing Nassau and his staff pulled away, dipping over the swells.

"Egad," murmured Edwards, "they go back faster than they came."

Moslem seamen were jumping from the rail into the water; others, who could cram themselves into one of the boats, were pulling away for Otchakof.

"Good!" barked Ivak when he heard of Jones' purpose. "Hassan's men will have their blood warmed up. They will fight like hemp eaters after this. But will Paul go with us?"

"He ought not to. No admiral has seen fit to lead a cutting-out party in person before. So—I'll lay you dollars against rubles that he goes."



IT WAS midnight before Jones returned from the flotilla. He had rallied Korsakof's division of gunboats and dislodged the remainder of Hassan's small craft, driving them within range of the Moslem batteries. Scattered about the shoals the hulks of nine Turkish ships still smoldered and flickered, like the embers of gigantic watch fires.

Before he left, Jones had given instructions to the second in command to pick out



a hundred and forty men, and issue them small arms—cutlasses and boarding pikes, and pistols for every other man. The Russian, who had had no dinner that afternoon, was pleased when Ivak offered to select the detachment for him.

"But they must be volunteers. His excellency said so."

"Aye, they will be," Ivak assured him gravely.

Whereupon, after assuring himself that Lieutenant Edwards would supervise the selection, the Russian retired to the ward-room and dinner. Cossacks, he reflected, knew the business of boarding—they were half pirates anyway.

They began to pick out men, choosing first the veterans from the army, then the Don Cossacks, and sailors selected by Dmitri.

To Edwards it seemed as if they picked out the greatest rogues of the lot, but Ivak was satisfied and so was Pierre. Those who were chosen began to make fun of the rest until Ivak ordered them below for gruel and vodka and a little sleep, naming Pierre and Dmitri to watch for the return of the admiral, while he and Edwards went aft to see to the small arms.



PAUL JONES ordered the boarding party mustered in the waist for inspection. He had brought back with him three long shallops—riverboats captured from the Turks—and he set some of the Cossacks to work at once wrapping rags around the oars.

They were all watching him, as he examined their pistols and greeted some that he knew by name. They noticed the square set to his shoulders, and the way he wore his three-cornered hat a little aslant. They tried to listen when he called the lieutenant from the *Vladimir* and Ivak together for a few words.

When he took his seat at the tiller of the first shallop they nudged one another and whispered. He was going with them. No doubt of that now.

Edwards was with Jones in the first boat; Ivak and Dmitri had the second, and the lieutenant took the last, in which Pierre found himself.

"S'bogun!" a voice called after them softly.

The dark mass of the three-decker fell away as the oars bit into the water and they started down the channel almost

silently because the thumping of the thole-pins was muffled by the rags. Jones' shallop was in the lead, the others following close enough to keep it in sight.

Out of the maw of the boat eye-balls flickered at the man who sat in his shirt sleeves by the tiller. The dull gleam of bared steel or teeth that flashed in a smile gave him assurance that they were ready for what was to come.

"He is like a man of stone," one whispered under his breath. "Aye, like those stone figures—the *kurgans* on the steppe."

They sensed his cheerfulness, and it made them light-hearted, so that they turned to stare at the burned framework of a stranded ship, still licked by little flames, or at the camp-fires along the shore which were like red eyes winking at them. They had never seen so many fires before, and Paul Jones studied the shore thoughtfully.

These were not watch fires. The Turks must have moved back several regiments and bivouacked near the line of the Otchakov fortifications. He headed inshore until they were skirting the outer fringe of the rushes. By doing so he avoided whatever patrol boats were out in the channel. If the shallops were seen by pickets on the land, they were taken for Tartar fishing craft. Cutters might have aroused suspicion, but certainly the Moslems were not looking for a raid by the Russians that night.

Jones followed out his plan, which was to work alongshore under the very guns of the water batteries, until he came to the jetties. That evening he had noted carefully the position of the galley, anchored in the center of Hassan's flotilla.

"Here's the corner bastion," whispered Edwards. "Yonder lantern is on the palisade. What's all the stir about?"

Far off in the darkness horses neighed and wagons creaked and armed men marched, or so it seemed. The shore was rife with movement, but nothing could be seen and the murmur of the wind in the rushes and the lap and gurgle of the water made it impossible to judge what was happening.

"On my soul and honor, some mischief is brewing," added the Englishman, bending closer to the water to listen.

Jones laid a hand on his knee warningly as they passed under the stern of a small zebec and heard men talking on the deck.

Evidently they were noticed because the

murmur of voices ceased and someone hailed them in Turki.

"*Ma'uzbillah!* Even the dogs take refuge behind walls. Are ye from the river Boug?"

"From the river," a Syrian in front of the officers made response promptly.

Edwards wondered what had happened at the river; but they were not challenged again, although they made out the loom of the two water batteries and the muzzles of cannon a stone's throw away. When they heard the clattering thole-pins of a guardship approaching, Jones gave command to cease rowing, and they drifted until the other boat pulled past.

He steered around anchored vessels, penetrating into the mass of shipping from which Edwards for one wondered whether they would escape again. But in the early hours of the morning the Moslem crews slept like the weary men they were, until the long hull and the raking yards of Hassan's galley loomed up before the shallops.

Then came a sharp challenge and the flash and bellow of a musket, proof that the Algerians were awake. Edwards swore under his breath, finding time to wonder again why the watchers on this particular vessel should fire at small boats so casually, not knowing that the Algerians were accustomed to keep all other craft away from the galley for a good and sufficient reason.

"Mr. Edwards," observed Jones, "be pleased to order the men to pull with a will for that galley."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HORSEMAN IN THE MIST

AND with a will the men in the shallops bent to their oars, closing in like hawks on a heron. Delay would have brought a discharge of shotted carronades. Jones, rising to his feet, steered under the counter of the galley and let go the tiller as the sailors dropped the oars. Some tossed small grappling hooks with lines attached over the rail; others pulled themselves up to the sills of the open ports, actually gaining footing on the muzzles of the cannon.

Over their heads a shouting arose—a pattering of bare feet on the deck boards—the angry mutter of a drum. Muskets

flashed along the bulwarks, and bullets slapped into the water behind them. Since firearms were invented the children of Othman have usually overshot their mark.

Edwards saw Jones catch a line and go up it, his feet braced against the galley's side. Turning to a bearded giant at his side, the Englishman offered him a shilling to lift him to his shoulders. Promptly the sailor dropped his pike and gripped the officer about the knees, heaving him up as easily as if Edwards had been a man of straw.

Some one gave him a hand and swung him to the rail, in time to see Jones stand on the bulwark.

"Up with ye, lads," he called down to those in the shallop. "Don't fire till ye can singe their beards!"

Drawing his own pistol he thrust it into the face of an Algerian who was running at the admiral with a drawn simitar. The man crashed down into the scuppers and Edwards jumped over his body. A dozen sailors had gained footing on the deck beside him, and those who came up from the shallop discharged their pistols as they straddled the rail.

But now a flare at the break of the poop scattered the darkness and showed turbaned figures thronging from forecastle and poop. They stared in amazement at the Christians climbing into the waist, then rushed, simitars in one hand, knives in the other and a shout ululating in their throats.

They hewed at the pike heads thrust toward them and leaped forward, stabbing with their curved daggers. Cutlas clanged against simitar, and the shouting grew to a hoarse roar, wordless and menacing as men came to grips and blood spattered on the deck.

Sailors were coming up from the third shallop, and Pierre, cutlas in hand, plunged into the fight. Throwing his smoking pistol into the face of a Moslem, he slashed the man through the ribs and stooped to pick up a half pike that lay by a dead Russian. With this in his left hand, he cleared a space for others to follow.

The big Provençal, stripped to the waist, shining with sweat, teeth gleaming through the tangle of his beard, roared from an open throat. The mighty thews and the height of him made even blood crazed Moslems pause, and the sailors rallied to him as the Algerians thronged forward in greater numbers.

Paul Jones, leaving the bulwark, thrust to Pierre's side, his slender rapier making play under the whirling arm of the giant.

The boarders were being pressed back and harassed by musketry from the galley's poop when a shout went up from the other rail.

"*Hourol!*"

The second shallop had passed to the far side of the galley and Ivak and the Cossacks—who were old hands at this sort of thing—swarmed up the side almost without opposition. Their rush took the Algerians aback, and broke up the crowd of Moslems in the waist into little knots. The Cossacks had the advantage of pistols, and held their fire until they could bring down a man.

Raging like trapped wolves, Hassan's men were beaten back to the quarter-deck. Many, cut off from their fellows, jumped over the rail. No one cried for quarter and no quarter was given.

Around the poop ladders a bitter struggle began, almost in silence. Good swordsmen, and dour fighters, the Algerians held the ladders against the pikes and cutlasses of the boarders, while the muskets of the *reis* and his officers picked off the Russians.

"Mr. Edwards!" Paul Jones' voice rang out. "We must dislodge those fellows on the poop. Order the boatswain to whip up that bucket of hand grenades from his shallop. He can light his slow match from the lantern at the mainm'st."

At that moment Dmitri was occupied in a self-appointed task. He had armed himself with an ax and was hacking at the door of the poop cabin, which had been fastened from within. The overhang of the deck protected him from the muskets of the Algerians, and he was making the splinters fly. When Edwards shouted at him he had chopped a hole in the door and smashed the bar that held it in place.

Either he did not hear, or he refused to obey the order. Edwards started toward him, when a shout went up simultaneously from Algerians and Cossacks.

"Hassan!"

A stocky form thrust through the men on one of the ladders and the sailors below scattered. The pasha, the sea rover of Algiers, stood on his own quarterdeck for the last time, his beard bristling as his lips twisted in animal-like rage. His cloth-of-gold coat was stained and spotted on the left side where a bullet had raked his ribs.

He held up his left hand and spoke, panting between the words.

"'Tis quarter he offers you, sir," explained Edwards in the lull that followed the appearance of the Moslem leader. "He says that you and yourm en will never win free from here."

Paul Jones smiled.

"On the contrary, Mr. Edwards, I will offer him quarter. The galley is my prize."

The first words had barely passed the Englishman's lips when the Moslem swung up his heavy simitar and leaped, not at the officers but at Dmitri who was peering into the dark entrance of the cabin.

The Greek saw him coming and hurled the ax, drawing his knife at the same time. Hassan, quick on his feet as a wrestler, dodged the missile and struck. The curved blade of the simitar swept across Dmitri's torso and came away dripping. And the big boatswain moaned, falling heavily on his face, the soft muscles under his ribs severed and his stomach cut open.

Hassan spared him not a second glance, but rushed at Paul Jones, who took the sweep of the simitar on his rapier and turned it aside with a twist of the wrist. Before Hassan could strike again, or the American could recover his guard, Ivak came back between them and engaged the pasha's blade with his saber.

For a full moment those on the quarter-deck stepped back, to give room to the swordsmen. The two blades clashed and slithered together and sparks flew under the waning glow of the flare overhead. Ivak, the taller, was also the calmer of the two; but Hassan's strength and cat-like swiftness evened the balance.

Jones and Edwards, resting the tips of their rapiers on the deck followed with fascinated eyes the progress of this duel; for here was no riposte, no thrust in tierce, but the savage onset of giants, both swordsmen of a race of swordsmen. So might Sohrab have fought with Rustam on the plains of Iran, slashing with a full armed sweep and leaping clear, the two blades making a ring of light over their heads.

They passed over the groaning Dmitri, smashed against the quarter-deck rail and jumped clear. This gave the Cossack the chance he had been looking for. He tossed his saber from his right to his left hand and struck over Hassan's guard.



The pounding of their feet on the deck boards ceased and those who watched saw that Ivak's blade had cut to the Moslem's shoulder on the right side and was caught in the neck muscles. Hassan's simitar clattered on the deck. Then, with a wrench that must have meant sheer agony, he twisted free and leaped to the rail, springing into the water.

A wail like the cry of a sea gull stilled the shout of the sailors. Out of the black cabin entrance emerged a shape half hidden in swirling silk and a veil that concealed everything but a woman's eyes. A woman's eyes that blazed with fury, and wild grief.

Her bare arms, gleaming with bracelets, were raised over her head and her anklets clinked as she sprang over the prostrate Greek and climbed to the rail. The superstitious sailors drew back and crossed themselves as if an apparition had come up out of the underworld.

Ivak who stood nearest peered at her and gave tongue—

"Kalil! The she — of Hassan."

Poised on the rail she stared down at the men as if summoning Allah's thunderbolts out of the sky to blast them.

"Aye, Kalil," she screamed, "the beloved of Hassan. Hear, O Hassan, for I come to thee. . . ."

With that she was gone, disappearing into the void of blackness so silently that men were found thereafter who swore that she had vanished into the air itself. But the Russian lieutenant who had been reloading his pistols methodically stepped to the rail and leveled his weapons at the two streams of phosphorescence that moved away from the galley's side where the Moslems were swimming.

Edwards however struck up his pistols with the flat of his rapier.

"Would you fire on a woman? Let them have their chance, man! Faith," he laughed, "this night is out of the very pages of the Thousand and One Nights. Look yonder!"

The Moslems on the poop had lost heart at the downfall of their leader, and the *reis* himself, cloaked and hooded and striding with the pride that is greater than defeat and disgrace, had descended the ladder and thrown down his weapons in front of Paul Jones. The others followed his example, hearing that the American had offered them

their lives. Some fifty surrendered and were astonished past belief when they were not slain out of hand in spite of promises.

Jones issued strict orders that none of the prisoners should be harmed, and they were herded in the waist of the galley. Edwards, cupping his eyes in his hands, could no longer make out Hassan and Kalil swimming toward the shore. But he thought he could see two shadows moving away into the mists.

He wondered—for Edwards was always cool and meditative of the why and wherefore of things that happened in the Black Sea—whether Hassan had come down because he had understood the order to bring the grenades, or whether he had tried to reach Kalil.



PIERRE bent over Dmitri who lay curled up, one arm gripping his slashed abdomen. The other hand stabbed the air in the direction of the cabin entrance. The Greek seemed to want him to go in there.

"I'm counted out, Pierre," he muttered through set teeth. "Search—the poop. Hassan keeps treasure—on galley. Loot, for all."

Pierre's memory was stirred by half-forgotten words; Kalil—she had talked of the riches on this galley. And Dmitri had hazarded his life to break down the door.

The two were unnoticed in the corner by the wheel, while the Russians were gathering the prisoners together and combing out the forecastle and lower deck, and the Cossacks under Jones and Edwards were endeavoring to make sail. The flare had gone out, leaving the deck in gloom. But across the Liman the sky was growing less opaque, and the outlines of the shore and fortifications were taking shape.

The Greek gripped Pierre's knee convulsively.

"*Sant' Nicolo!* Alexiano will follow me—with short shrift. We—both—*renegados* in Algiers. Moslems we were, by —! And the Moslems will seek him out and put an end to him. The followers of the prophet have marked their bullets for those who go over to the *giaours*."

"Aye, aye," said Pierre, and Dmitri's torrent of words went on.

"Kalil talked with Alexiano after he took command. He is afraid. He promised that he would do what he could to hamstring

the Russians 'if Hassan would spare his life. Now he is more afraid, because the Russians have flayed Hassan. He knows the Moslems will find him." A gulping groan choked the words in his throat. "The dogs! The sons of swine—I did not fear them."

Inarticulate curses bubbled the blood on his lips, and Pierre hastened away to seek Ivak. He found the Cossack inspecting Hassan's sword by the lantern, and after a glance around to see that there was no fighting and nothing to be done except by sailors, the Provençal led the way into the poop cabin, cutlas in hand.

The passage was empty and most of the compartments dark. They stumbled over a pile of quilts left by some one roused from a sound sleep, perhaps Hassan himself. At the end of the passage was a glow of ruddy light, and Ivak halted to listen and make sure that no one was breathing near at hand.

Then he strode through the opening and kicked against a solid teak door to make certain no one lurked behind it. The compartment had no other opening and the air was heavy with the smell of sandalwood and aloes.

"Allah!" he said feelingly, as he caught sight of the simitars and tulwars piled in the corner and the round shields hung on the bulkheads. "*Hai*, here is a blade made in Damascus; here is the saber of a mameluke *aga*—mark the crescent of emeralds—and here—may the — fly away with me else—is the sticker that belonged to Gherai Khan. He used to be master of the Crimea."

While Ivak was turning over the trophies, Pierre opened one or two of the sandalwood boxes, and poked a speculative finger into the rolls of silk so delicate in texture that he could see through it. A rattan chest pleased him better, being filled with gold plate of every description. Ivak joined him and picked up some of the pieces eagerly.

"This is from the table of a Roman duke. See the crest! And this noggin was fashioned in Stamboul. Yonder's a Persian thing, with writing on it. *Ekh*, Hassan took plunder from all places. What a fellow! He——"

They stared in mute amazement at the glowing jewels in an ivory casket that Pierre opened. Even in the dull light of the lantern these precious stones gleamed with a life of their own. Pierre had never seen

such things, but Ivak knew the value of plunder like this.

"You could match stones with the caliph of grand Cairo," he muttered, "and have enough left over to buy Egypt."

His eyes yearned toward the weapons, while Pierre's fingers itched to bear off and hide some of the gold.

"In other years I heard of this," he whispered. "In the galleys of Algiers they told me of this ship of Hassan's. *Bon sang!* What will become of all this?"

Ivak scratched his head with the hilt of his saber.

"'Twill go into the breeches of the grantees—Potemkin and his monkey, Nassau and the rest. May they pare the——'s hoofs!"

For a moment temptation seized them and they did not look at each other.

"Nay, 'tis Jean Paul's prize," swore Pierre suddenly. "We will tell him——"

"After locking it up," assented the Cossack who had been examining the door which had a serviceable iron lock with a key in place. Evidently Hassan or Kalil had been sleeping in the cabin when the galley was boarded. "I promised the lads they would find loot——"

A sudden lurch of the ship made him lose his footing and stagger against the chests.

By mutual consent they turned to the door, and Ivak locked it carefully, thrusting the key into his pocket. In the dark passage he stopped abruptly, pulling Pierre to his side. They could hear a man moving toward them cautiously, and others breathing near at hand. Ivak's blade slithered from his scabbard and he crouched, motioning for Pierre to do the same. They could not tell who the others were in the poop, and if they had been seen handling the riches in the stern cabin. Ivak was ready for a knife thrust at his throat, if they had been spied upon by a Greek or Syrian who would most certainly expect that they had carried off on their persons the pick of the loot.

His keen ears caught the click of a pistol hammer pulled back and then a man's knees blundered against his shoulder, and a hoarse voice muttered feelingly—

"—— your eyes!"

Pierre seized the Cossack's sword-arm, and stood up. He had heard that expression in the past, though he did not know what it meant, and invariably it was used by men of one nation.

"That is an Englishman," he whispered, adding, "Is that Lieutenant Edwards? 'Tis Pierre Pillon who speaks, and the *sotnik* Ivak is here."

"What the — are you two about?" grumbled Edwards. "Are the cabins cleared of Turks? Well, bear a hand then, at these nine-pounders in the poop. Pillon, you can lay a gun. Come with me—'ware my left arm. There's a bit of shrapnel in it."

Sailors were trying to bring one of the small guns to bear on the shadowy outline of a felucca that had opened fire on them with grape. The other vessels were closing in on the galley. Matters could not very well be worse for them.

Some of the Russians on the foredeck, while fighting was still going on at the poop, had slipped the cable without waiting for orders. The result, not at first perceptible, was that the galley had drifted with the wind until it brought up in the mud. Edwards thought that they were now within musket shot of one of the shore batteries.

Owing to the confusion among the Turks, this battery had not opened on them; but the nearest feluccas were aware by now that a small party had boarded the galley and captured it. Their escape was cut off and in another hour it would be full daylight, when they would be blown out of the water if they did not surrender.

One of the shallops was still beside the galley, lashed fast by a sailor. Edwards had offered to fight the galley, if Jones would take to the shallop and make off with a boat's crew. In the smoke and the dense mist that hung like a veil over the Liman he could still escape. But Jones had refused to leave his men behind.

The American had ransacked the vessel for another anchor and cable—on the chance of working the galley off—without finding anything that would serve his purpose. Now he was throwing overside everything movable, to lighten ship.

"'Tis the end of our luck," groaned Pierre.

He thought ruefully of the treasure he had had in his hands a moment ago, and searched the uttermost limits of a vocabulary enriched by years in a slave galley to express his opinion of Russian seamanship, while Ivak listened in approving silence.

"*Allons, mes camerades*," he said grimly, seizing the first of the powder sacks that were fetched up from below," stand by to

show these — how honest Christian mariners say their prayers."



FOR half an hour the dozen cannon of the galley roared defiantly at the growing array of Moslem small craft which took position around Hassan's ship. Hampered by the dense mist and the danger of firing on their comrades, the Turks held off—content to wait for daylight when they could see their target clearly. Pierre worked at the nine-pounder until the first shots from the shore battery smashed into the galley, and a chain shot struck the gun, dismounting it, and killing three of its crew. He was hit by flying splinters in the chest and thigh, and, after a glance at the useless piece, made his way to the quarter-deck with difficulty.

He limped to the wheel where a man stood motionless, leaning on the spokes. Pierre looked around.

They were still aground. The mist, like a gray curtain, shut them in. The deck was stained and slippery, and the men who labored on it stumbled over the wreckage of gear and the bodies of their mates. At first Pierre thought that the prisoners had been wiped out by the Moslem fire. Then he saw that they had been set to work in the foredeck, where the glow of flames showed through the companion.

Another burst of the heavy guns of the battery swept over the galley, too high to do much damage. The red flashes seemed to Pierre to come from almost over the bow.

Jones came aft and halted by the men at the wheel. He was hatless and in the dim light his face showed, lined and haggard; his eyes, probing into the mist were steady. In the walk of the man, in the poise of the head was the indomitable courage of ten years ago. It was part of his nature, this stubbornness.

To cease firing and call for quarter would mean the slaughter of all his men except the officers by the Moslems who were half mad with rage, in any case, after the burning of the ships the day before.

Of this, however, Pierre did not think. He spoke to the admiral, shyly, looking up from bandaging his thigh.

"*Tout va bien, monsieur*. All goes well—eh?"

The American glanced around with a quick smile and responded in French.



"What is your name, my lad? Pierre? Well, Pierre, so you don't want to strike our colors?"

"But no—no!" Pierre mustered up his courage, and quivering with delight, said the words that had been on the tip of his tongue for days. "Ah, monsieur, it was warmer than this on the old *Richard*, was it not? *Sacré nom d'un chien*, but it was an affair, that. Me, I was there."

Jones walked to the rail and came back, glancing from the sails to the dark patch that was the battery.

"I was in the marine guard on the poop, monsieur," went on Pierre anxiously, "and you—you said, '*All goes well, Pierre.*' You remember, perhaps?"

"Aye," said Paul Jones, smiling again at the eagerness of the sailor. "I think you handed me a musket——"

"*Tiens!* It was so. You remember everything." The big Provençal grinned and looked around to see if others had heard what the admiral said, forgetting that they could not understand. It occurred to him to tell the American what they had found in the cabin, but he thought that it did not matter, when they might be blown out of their skins in another moment.

So he waited, nerves strained, for the next discharge from the battery. No doubt the Turks were lowering the muzzles of the cannon.

The firing grew heavier all around them, and he heard the rattle of musketry. A confused shouting arose on shore. Edwards came up and remarked that the fort on the hill was firing.

The two officers stared into the thinning mist with growing curiosity. In the direction of the battery the tumult increased and they could hear shouted commands and the tramp of marching battalions.

After a while Edwards looked at his watch. It was nearly five o'clock and somewhere the sun was rising. No feluccas were within sight and the men at the galley's remaining guns had ceased firing for want of a target. All Otchakov seemed to be in motion around the battery, but only stray bullets whined around the galley. Unable to make out what was on foot, they went forward to the bow, where the flames were now under control.

"Here they come, sir," called out Edwards suddenly, "to board the galley."

Out of the mist a horseman splashed

through the rushes, turning toward the stranded vessel as soon as he saw it. When the water was up to his knees he stood up in the stirrups and howled like a wolf. A dozen Cossacks who had been looking on with interest gave tongue immediately.

Straining his eyes, Pierre made out that the rider wore a black sheepskin hat, and a red sash. Unless he was mad, this must be a Cossack *sotnik*, riding out of the Turkish fortifications. Doubtless a trick.

"I have it, sir," chuckled Edwards. "Faith, we're all dead, and this is Charon's blood brother, come to usher us across the Styx."

But Jones motioned impatiently for silence and Ivak came running up. He hailed the rider who roared back a response.

"That is a *sotnik* of the Don regiment, your honor," Ivak informed Edwards. "He presents Little Father Suvarof's compliments to his excellency, Admiral Jones, with the request that his excellency cease firing on the bastions, which are now in the hands of the Russians."

It was long afterward that Pierre understood what had happened. Suvarof had crossed the Boug when the fleet engagement was at its hottest. He had attacked the advanced posts of the Turks with the regiment of cavalry that had crossed with him, and had driven them back into the trenches before Otchakov by evening. By then his full division was on the peninsula, taking position in front of the trenches. A firm believer in opportunity, Suvarof had attacked the trenches at dawn when Jones' raid had drawn the attention of Hassan and his men to the flotilla. Suvarof himself had led the bayonet charge that took the water batteries in flank and drove the garrison up into the Otchakov wall and the fort on the hill.

It was the Moslems in retreat that Jones had heard when he was rowing down the Liman, and the camp-fires he had noticed were those of Suvarof's division.

The courier in the mist shouted again, and Ivak began to chew his mustache and swear under his breath.

"That dog brother says, sir," he explained to the officers, "that the cavalry is in the field now, and the navy can go home and sleep—if we can sail that far without running aground."

Jones and Edwards glanced at each other with understanding. Ivak was from a cavalry regiment.

"Tell him," instructed the American gravely, "that we will land men to show them how to turn the guns in the batteries to bear on the town."

Ivak brightened perceptibly and the Cossack splashed away with a wave of the hand. Tired as he was, Paul Jones called for volunteers to go with him into the bastions, and, wearied beyond belief, all those who heard tumbled into the shallop when he took the tiller again.

## CHAPTER X

*Matched pearls for a woman's throat—gold dinars for the fingers of the aged men—a robe of honor, of samite and silk for the councilor. When the city was taken many were found to plunder the bazaar. Yet one there was who rode on to another place, saying, "What is profit without honor?"*

IT WAS many days before Pierre Pillon saw Paul Jones again. And it was more than a few hours before the least wounded of those on the galley could sleep. Jones had left Edwards in command of the prize and when the Turkish flotilla withdrew to the protection of the fort and the open sea, the Russian lieutenant was sent to the *Vladimir* for a spare anchor, cable, food and a surgeon.

Edwards had been told by the American to let no other officer take over the galley, and under no circumstances to permit it to be burned as Nassau had burned the frigates. After the decks had been cleared, and the seriously wounded attended to, and the rest had had a meal of sorts, Edwards worked the galley off the mud and made sail as best he could to the anchorage of the Russian fleet.

When the wounded had been sent ashore, and the prisoners with a guard, only a half dozen Cossacks were left on the galley. All available anchorages around the jetties and the warehouses being taken, Edwards sailed up the river Dnieper. The slender galley that had been the delight of Hassan of Algiers now lay at anchor beside the barren steppe.

Ivak and Pierre did not let the Englishman sleep until they had admitted him into the secret. Unlocking the door and leaving Pierre there to keep watch, Ivak displayed the weapons and the chests with the pride of a discoverer.

"It is all for the admiral," he explained. "We have kept it hidden."

Edwards inspected the plate curiously and lingered over the jewels with a soft whistle of amazement. Reluctantly he put them back in their places, for he was human and under his fingers lay surety of a life of ease.

"By right," he observed, "the half of this should go to Admiral Jones and his men, and half to the Crown. But Potemkin will get his paws on it, and then—" He shrugged. "He may take it on the plea that he is sending it to Tsarkoe-seloe, but her majesty will never see these trinkets."

The Cossack glanced at him thoughtfully, and when he locked the door of the cabin, put the key back into his pocket. He and Pierre had expected that Edwards might suggest some way of hiding the treasure, which was beginning to loom large now that the fighting was at an end.

When the Englishman and Pierre had made themselves beds in the adjoining cabins and had fallen into the utter oblivion of their first sleep in forty-four hours, Ivak sat down in the passageway to smoke and rub his saber clean with a cloth that he always carried in his girdle. In spite of the heat, the strain of the fighting and a day of hard labor that he did not relish, the big Cossack was alert and to all appearances untired.

Certainly he polished the saber until it shone, and then put a new edge on it with a small whetstone. When he was satisfied with it, he laid it aside, and after sitting for a long time, listening to the measured breathing of his companions, he rose and unlocked the teak door, making little noise for all his bulk.

When he came out again darkness had fallen. Pierre found him a little after dawn, sitting by the *kasha* pot of the Cossacks, who had built a fire and were breakfasting off a pair of rabbits and a cask of vodka which they had managed to forage for themselves.

"Pietr," announced Ivak, "I am going to find Paul. I will take the shallop and two men, and go and see that he does not get himself killed. You and the Englishman watch that." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder at the poop. "Here is the key."

He had been gone for hours before Edwards was aroused. A courier boat came up from the flagship with an order from

Jones for the interpreter to join him, if Edwards' wound permitted.

The Englishman's arm pained him a good deal, but he waited only long enough to bolt some rabbit and vodka.

"Where is Ivak?" he asked in French, and when Pierre explained he swore doubtfully.

There was no wind, and they lacked men to handle the heavy sails; he could not take the galley, and the order did not admit of delay. There was no alternative but to leave the Frenchman in charge of Hassan's ship and treasure until he could find the admiral.

He took the key and glanced inside the door, satisfying himself that the chests were all in their places. Calling for a candle, he smeared wax over the crack of the door after he had closed it, and pressed his watch fob into service for a seal.

"Ivak says you are to be trusted," he remarked. "Consider that you are now rated acting sergeant of marines. Can you make these four chaps understand you? Good! Take charge of the galley and remember that the order is to give it up to no one except the admiral himself."

"Monsieur," said Pierre, "I will not let any pig of a Muscovite set foot on this deck."

"Hum!" Edwards took snuff with a wry grin. "I see that you have not been long on the Black Sea. It may be some time before you are relieved. I'll offer odds that the admiral is bombarding Otchakov, or outfitting the squadron for a raid on Constantinople."

 EDWARDS' surmise was close to the truth. At intervals during the three days that he waited on the galley, Pierre heard the far-off booming of guns, and noticed that couriers came and went along the Kherson trail that was within sight of their anchorage. After he had found the place where the Cossacks had stowed the odds and ends that they had looted from the decks, and had picked out and loaded a brace of serviceable pistols, he was more than a little content with his berth.

His men never lacked for rations—trading for melons and grapes with the native skiffs that passed up and down the river, and catching small sturgeon on lines of their own making. He was stiff from the

healing of his wounds, and enjoyed to the full the luxury of the poop cabins. But he did not disturb the wax seal, telling himself that before long he would sail the galley down to the fleet and disclose to Paul Jones what a valuable prize they had taken.

He was indulging in such pleasant speculation when one of the Cossacks came to the quarterdeck and called to him to look up the river.

Approaching the galley he saw Nassau's great barge, rowed by twenty pairs of sweeps. The barge, instead of continuing on toward the fleet, turned and headed for the galley.

"St. Anne of Auray!" he muttered. "This high-well-born is coming to burn this vessel, like the others."

He ran to the ladder-head as the rowers on one side the barge lifted their oars and the boat drifted down to the galley's side. Two men with boat-hooks held fast while an aide stepped from the stern to the ropes, and halted when his head came above the deck.

"Pardon, monsieur," observed Pierre, "but the orders of his excellency the admiral are that no one is to be allowed on this galley."

As he had come out of the fighting, clad only in a tattered pair of breeches, Pierre had borrowed some garments from the gleanings of the Cossacks and now stood arrayed in a loose white shirt, a green sash and a pair of pantaloons that rivalled those of the dead Dmitri. In fact Pierre had a suspicion that they were Dmitri's; but then the man was dead. Over his head, to keep off the midges, the Provençal had bound the turban cloth of a slain Moslem.

So he looked like a blood-stained giant, bearded and smiling, with the butts of two long pistols sticking out of his sash.

"What ———'s leavings are you?" demanded the aide in bad French.

"Sergeant Pierre Pillon, your nobility, at present in command of this vessel."

"In command—" The officer spluttered, and realized that he was being kept waiting. "Out of the way, dog!"

"The order was the admiral's," objected Pierre. "This galley is one prize you will not burn."

A burst of laughter from below showed that he had been overheard, and the officer grew red. Presently his head disappeared



and when it came up again he waved a sheet of paper like a flag of truce. Pierre could not read his own name, fairly printed, but he knew a document signed by a general officer when he saw one. This had a scrawl, and under it a broad seal hung by a silk ribbon.

"It is you who will burn, you dolt!" snapped the officer. "This is an order signed by his illustriousness, Prince Potemkin, commander-in-chief in the Black Sea. We are not going to burn the galley. His highness desires it to be brought up to Kherson, so that he can sail down in it to review the fleet."

"Well, he didn't bother his noddle about the fleet when the Turks were around all the same," the Provençal muttered to himself, bitterly regretting the absence of Ivak and Edwards.

What they would have done, he did not know, but Ivak was a resourceful person. The aide pushed past him and turned to assist the prince to the deck. A half dozen others followed and stared at the empty poop and the Cossacks curiously.

"You lied, rogue, when you said you were in command here," said the aide.

"No, monsieur, it is true. The officers were summoned away."

The aide spoke to Nassau who barely glanced at Pierre and turned into the passage. They passed by the side cabins, and stopped to inspect the seal on the end door. Then Nassau called out and one of the sailors came up from the barge with an ax.

"Messieurs," cried the Provençal angrily, "an officer has sealed up his personal belongings in that cabin."

"Who told you that?" demanded the aide.

"Lieutenant Edwards, if it please you."

Nassau merely signed to the sailor and the ax began to splinter the teak. Pierre ground his teeth, well aware that he was helpless. He had risked his life in speaking, and it would need only a word of any of the *boyars*, much less an order from the Prince-Marshal to have him shot down where he stood.

The door crashed in, and Nassau and his aide entered with more than a little eagerness. Pierre approached until he stood by the sailor and listened with all his ears. The officers were ransacking the chests—he caught the clink of plate—and talking excitedly.

After a long pause Nassau swore angrily.

"By the eyes of —! Alexiano said there would be more than this. Those pearls are worth no more than a wench or two."

"*Mordieu*—the Greek is not to be believed."

"He was afraid to come. It's vastly quaint; he was knifed after all in Kherson by a native woman."

Nassau seemed to be in no mood for amusement, and there was more rummaging while Pierre did some rapid thinking. Alexiano had fled from the fleet to Kherson, where he must have heard of the capture of the galley. He had hinted to the Prussian that the prize was a rich one.

There would have been time, and no more for Nassau to get the order from Potemkin and travel back to the fleet to investigate the matter for himself.

"My dear count," the prince spoke again. "This casket is empty. Burn me, but that whippersnapper Edwards has had his finger in this. Have in the surly rogue, and question him."

Pierre put in appearance promptly, and a glance showed him that the suspicions of the *boyars* were well founded. Most of the swords that had lain in the corner were missing, and the chest that had held the gold plate had no more than a layer on the top, the rest being filled up with quilts.

Also the casket in which he had seen the best of the precious stones was quite empty.

He was sure that the seal Edwards had left on the door had been unbroken until now. Assuredly the lieutenant took nothing away; he had been asleep until Pierre awakened him. The Cossacks would not have known how to replace the seal, and he was morally certain that they had no loot stored on the galley that he had not unearthed.

A river thief might have entered one of the ports of the other cabins while he was out on deck, or asleep. But there was the seal again. He thought of Ivak. Had the Cossack stolen the better half of the loot? But how? Ivak had carried nothing out of the galley.

"Search the galley," snarled Nassau. "And flog these *duraks* at the mast until they tell anything they know. Begin with this one."

He turned back to his examination of the chests, turning over the ivory and silk in his fingers impatiently until an exclamation from his companion made him look up.

The aide was moving slowly back toward the bulkhead, his lace jabot and carefully dressed peruke fairly quivering with indignation. The sailor had dropped the ax and was staring, slack jawed, as if a water fiend had invaded the cabin of a sudden.

Pierre had drawn his pistols and leveled them at the noblemen. His hands quivered and his brown eyes blazed with rage.

"Messieurs," he said hoarsely, "I have sworn an oath to the good Mary of the Seas. With these hands I will let out the life of the man who lays a lash on my back. Give the order, and these barkers will do for you."

Sheer incredulity held the Prince of Nassau-Siegen voiceless. A Russian peasant would have fallen on his knees to thank the *boyars* for not taking his life. He lifted the eyeglass at the end of a silk cord and tried to focus it on Pierre, to study his face and to observe if the pans of the pistols were primed. But his fingers were not steady enough.

"Let me leave the ship," went on Pierre. "Consider, messieurs, I am a sergeant acting under orders from the admiral. I will take my men with me."

Nassau's skin had whitened, and a small patch under one eye stood out distinctly.

"Do not pull the trigger," he muttered. "You will not be harmed. Only go quickly—you and your men." And he added, remembering that his aide was present, "Since you have orders."

"Then remain where you are, gentlemen."

When Pierre had backed out, the Prussian waited until his hand was steady again, and took snuff liberally.

"That is all the doing of this — of an American," he remarked to his companion, "who has made wolves out of these dogs of mariners. You noticed my dear count, how the sailor swore he had orders from the admiral to admit *no one* upon the galley?"

"Assuredly, *mon prince*." The aide, who hoped for much from Nassau's influence at court, nodded repeatedly. "His Highness, the Prince-Marshal Potemkin should hear of this."

"It is not necessary. Yesterday that *bavard* Jones haltered his own neck. Burn and blister me, if he did not play the wrong card. Potemkin will never forgive him."

"But how?"

"To-morrow you will know." Nassau brushed the snuff from the lace at his throat.

"It only remains for us to see how he will take his disgrace."

They lingered on one pretext or another until Pierre was well away from the galley with his men in one of the fishing skiffs that came up to hover around the barge. They understood each other perfectly, each thinking what a coward the other was.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ADMIRAL'S WALK

THAT evening Suvarof sat in the admiral's cabin of the *Vladimir*, having come twenty miles by horse litter and boat to talk with Paul Jones, who was then with the frigates that blockaded the peninsula. He was propped up on an ottoman, one leg stretched out, playing a game of chess against himself.

Ivak came and went, passing from ward-room to the admiral's gallery, outside the stern windows, his sheepskin *shuba* smelling to high heaven and his damp boots creaking as he tried to walk on his toes. It had rained all that day.

The Cossack had entrée to Jones' quarters, unannounced, but this evening he seemed to be on a self-appointed sentry-go on the gallery. Ostensibly he was watching for Jones. Actually he eyed Suvarof uneasily, like a gigantic urchin who both fears and hopes to be noticed.

Even privileged *sotniks* of a crack cavalry regiment do not interrupt the meditation of a general who has conquered an empire and opened up a new sea; Ivak probably was unaware that the man who sat hunched over the chessboard nursing a reed pipe had once stalemated Frederick the Great of Prussia, but he understood the significance of the sword that lay on the table—the blade of a Damascus simitar, the gold inlaid hilt agleam with sapphires and diamonds.

Suvarof, however, was more sparing of speech than usual, and only when Ivak had paused to stare admiringly at the sword of honor did he look up, frowning. From long experience with the Don Cossacks he knew that Ivak had a troubled conscience and wanted badly to tell about it.

"Are you hatching eggs on the gallery, *sotnik*? Brandy or plundering—which?"

Ivak started and took off his cap.

"As God lives, Little Father, I haven't

tasted brandy since the crops were put in the ground this season. And I haven't taken a copeck's worth of loot from a single Turk." When Suvarof went on with his maneuvering of the chessmen, he mustered up his courage. "It happened, Little Father, that I've hidden some gold and fine swords and precious stones."

"Ah."

"It happened that way. We found a cabin full of such things in the pasha's galley; fine things, truly, better than you could get by raiding a hundred Turkish villages." And he told the story of Hassan's treasure and its discovery.

"That Frenchman, Pietr, is a galliard, a splendid chap. But he can not see around a turn in the trail. I knew that somebody would hear of the treasure and loot it, so I took away the best of the things. When he and the Englishman slept the first night I went through everything and filled one chest with the best of the plate and the jewels. I made one bundle of the finest weapons. Then I lowered the chest and the bundle out of the port of the next cabin, into the shallop that was alongside us."

He glanced at Suvarof, trying to make out how his confession would be received.

"*Ekh*, no one suspected. We threw some skins over the things and watched like hawks, without telling Pietr, because whatever a chap says in this place is known to the spies. The *boyars* have their eyes and ears everywhere.

"We rowed around the Liman until dark; then we pulled up to the rump of this big ship and I climbed to the little gallery, and drew up the chest and the bundle with ropes. I covered them with the skins again, and watched. But no one ever comes out on the gallery, because only the admiral walks there, and he was away. I thought he would be on the *Vladimir*; but he was flying around after the Turks, far out at sea. He is a — at that sort of thing."

"Do his men obey?"

"Obey? They would die with Paul, as they call him."

Suvarof nodded, moving out a pawn to make good a line of defense.

"You have stolen horses in your day, Ivak. I did not send you to the fleet to steal."

"But this is different. The gold and the other things belong to Paul."

"You think he will distribute them among his men, and you and the Frenchman will share in it?"

"Aye—" Ivak checked himself. "But, look here, Little Father Suvarof—we pray that you will take charge of the treasure now—"

"And explain things to the American, to get you off," grumbled the old officer. "What has the French fire-eater done?"

"He fought on the galley like a wounded tiger. Cut—slash—he ripped right through them. That was what he did. But he drew a pistol on the Prussian prince, and the *boyar's* men will flay him alive if they can catch him."

"Devil take both of you! What else have you done? Well, send him in—if he is on the ship."

"Aye, *balko*," nodded Ivak, "a few hours ago he came up."

The Cossack hastened out, well content. He had told everything to Suvarof and had not been degraded and not much sworn at. Now that his general was on the ship, Ivak felt that his responsibilities were at an end. He returned with Pierre, who was less sure that they would escape unpunished, but gave a truthful account of what happened on the galley.

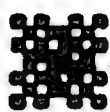
Suvarof sighed and filled his pipe slowly, wincing when he moved, for his leg pained him.

"Little Father," the Cossack observed after a moment's reflection, "When you sent us to this ship we built a *lopasik* and watched all that went on. When the Turks were hacking at Paul we were able, by God's mercy to do a little to help; but when the *boyars* fell away from him and plotted, we could do no more than a dog outside a fox's burrow. The *boyars* were worse than the Turks—"

"Enough said," grumbled Suvarof. "Go, you and the Frenchman, and sit on that chest until I summon you."

"Well, God be with you, Father!"

Ivak nudged Pierre and they went out to sit in the rain and speculate as to what would happen to their trove.



SUVAROF'S quick ear had heard footsteps in the passage, and when the door opened he was bending over the chessboard again. Then his dark eyes gleamed with pleasure and he swept the miniature silver warriors off the board.



"Ah, Jones, my friend; I can not stand to greet you. A ball through the hip, so I came to your flagship to get well."

Flinging off his wet cloak, Paul Jones stepped to the table. He smiled, but there were fresh lines around his eyes that told of a sleepless night, and the hollows under the cheekbones were deeper.

"It is I who must apologize, *mon general*, that none of my staff were here to receive you. Faith, every officer appointed to me seems to be absent at Kherson."

Suvarof glanced around the spacious cabin with its walnut wainscoting, its gold candlebra and the portrait of the Empress Catharine hanging opposite the stern windows. "Humph! I have been well entertained." He had noticed the empty cabins and the absence of servants and had guessed at the reason. "Sit, *mon camarade*. Do you play chess? No? Then we will talk—see, I have had a bottle of madeira heated, in that basin. Fill your glass—fill your pipe, and tell me why the — you sent a report to his Highness before you showed it to me."

Mechanically Jones did as the older man suggested, but without tasting the wine or lighting his pipe.

"My report gave Potemkin the details of the engagement in the Liman."

"Well?"

"His Highness was pleased to return me his revision of it. He forwarded it by the Chevalier de Ribas who came out to me this afternoon." Paul Jones' hand on the wine-glass tightened convulsively so that the slender stem snapped and the wine spilled upon the table, dripping unheeded on his knee. "By —, sir, 'tis not to be believed!"

Without comment Suvarof held out his hand, and the American drew from his coat pocket several crumpled sheets of paper, the outer one bearing fragments of the prince's seal.

When the general had finished reading, he folded the sheets carefully and sighed. The report in his hand stated that the battle had been fought under Potemkin's personal direction, in accordance with the orders the Prince-Marshal had given. Nassau was given credit for the disabling of nine of Hassan's ships, and breaking up the Turkish flotilla. The loss of the Moslems was given as four thousand and the Russians eight hundred. Only once was Jones' squadron mentioned, when it was stated

that owing to their deep draught the line-of-battle ships were obliged to remain spectators of the action.

"Well?" he said again.

"That is not my report. It is a version written in Kherson, omitting everything of the truth, except the number of killed. *Mon cher camarade*—" Jones flushed and sprang to his feet—"the loss of life in my squadron was nearly eight hundred; my men, uncovered in open boats, towed the vessels of the flotilla into action. Nassau's loss was five men."

Suvarof nodded. He had the details from Ivak and the officers of the *Vladimir*.

"His Highness," he remarked, "was in Kherson, sixty miles from the scene of the battle; but you must understand, Jones, my friend, that he desires to have the Court and the empress believe that all the credit is due to him and Nassau."

"The Chevalier Ribas informed me that his Highness was pleased to *order* me to sign this report and return it to headquarters. It is utterly false."

One by one the old Russian took up the silver chessmen and put them back in the box.

"Jones, you do not understand the Court. Wounds are not the only hardship; injustice and malice can cut as deep. A soldier must bear everything."

As the American was silent, he went on quizzically:

"Twenty four gold swords of honor were given the Prince-Marshal by the empress at the beginning of the campaign. He has bestowed one on himself, one on Nassau, and twenty-two to the officers of the flotilla."

Suddenly Jones laughed heartily, seeing the absurdity of a commander-in-chief receiving a distinction for services in a battle that he did not know had taken place until long afterward, for orders that he had never given.

"Undoubtedly," went on Suvarof, "Potemkin will be granted the high honor of the Order St. George, of the first grade—Nassau has already been recommended for the second—as well as a gift of valuable estates in White Russia with several thousand souls—serfs."

He pointed to the sheets of paper.

"Sign this, Jones, and you also will be decorated. You will be given the estates of a grandee of the empire."

"And my men—my officers?"

"Ah." Suvarof was silent.

"My men, who were exposed at all times," Jones' voice broke. "*Mes amis—mes braves!*"

His finely cut lips twisted in sudden distress, and any one watching the two, as Ivak and Pierre were, with all their eyes through the wide stern windows, would have thought that he and not the old Russian had been wounded that day.

"Ah." Suvarof closed the lid upon his chessmen and picked up a candle to light his pipe, that had gone out. "My friend, we in Russia are of the old world, half Asia in our blood. You are of the new, and perhaps the old must learn of honor from the new. I would rather lose this leg than have you leave us. Consider, Jones: Otchakof will fall to us in a month, and we will advance on Constantinople; we will march across Moldavia and drive the Moslems from the Adriatic. Potemkin will not always hold the reins of power. You would not refuse to serve with old father Suvarof—eh?"

"Would to God I could go with you!"

"If you refuse your signature to the report, it means the end of your career, on the Black Sea."

"Aye, the end!"

Jones picked up the folded sheets, and tore them across, and tore the pieces again, tossing them to the deck.

Before the American could move to prevent him, Suvarof gripped the table and limped erect on one leg, holding fast to the hand of his companion. Eye to eye they stood for a full moment, the swarthy seaman supporting the wound-scarred soldier.

"Sir," cried Paul Jones, a little hoarsely owing to the lump in his throat, "surely I have had honor, since I have had Alexander Suvarof for a friend."

After the manner of men who know their own minds, and the luxury of an hour's ease after hard days, they talked henceforth of anything but their parting—of horses, the rigging of ships, the campaigns of other days and comrades who were dead. Suvarof, remembering the two men on the gallery, called them in, bidding them to their blankets and saying that he would look after the chest and the bundle.

What the two friends said after that no one heard, although orderlies who were in the service of Potemkin tried their best to listen at keyhole and casement.



THE Prince of Nassau-Siegen was in high good humor when a month later, his barge rowed down the Dnieper to the flagship. He was surrounded by officers who sought his favor; he wore the ribbon of the George, and the flag of a vice-admiral was on the ensign staff.

He had come to the *Vladimir* to see how the American would take his *congé*—his dismissal. An imperial courier had arrived the day before from Petersburg with an order for Jones:

According to our imperial desire, based upon necessity, the sphere of service for our Vice-Admiral, the Chevalier Paul Jones, is now fixed in the northern seas. His Excellency the Vice-Admiral will at once proceed on the journey to our capital. His Excellency the Vice-Admiral will without ceremony present himself at our Palace of the Hermitage, where he will be acquainted with our further wishes.

CATHERINE.

Nassau was a little surprized that Jones should have invited Potemkin and the staff of his Highness as well as the captains of the fleet to a banquet on the flagship the day of his departure. He found a distinguished gathering on the after-deck where an awning had been spread.

In full court attire and dress swords he found the Prince de Repin and de Ligne, the diplomat. Ribas and Popoff, the chief of staff, waited on Potemkin, who had gratified his whim of sailing down in the galley of Hassan of Algiers. In attendance were Grevé and Fanshawe and the other captains.

And the courtiers who had come from Kherson were more than a little surprized when they noticed the dress swords of the officers of Jones' squadron. Edwards wore jauntily thrust through a silk sash an almost priceless simitar of Yemen with an inscription worked in gold, the weapon of a shah.

Fanshawe had a tulwar of blue steel, and Korsakof—the Russian lieutenant who had boarded the galley with Jones—a sword with a hilt set with matched sapphires and diamonds. These blades aroused the instant envy of those who lacked such trophies from the Moslems and questions were asked the owners, who replied that Admiral Jones had taken from Hassan Pasha his side arms and given them away.

Jones himself wore only the plain rapier he had brought to the Black Sea.

And Nassau, who was familiar with the

quarters in the *Vladimir*, noticed that the dinner was served on massive plate, fashioned after the Venetian and Spanish manner, plate that he had never laid eyes on before and superior even to Potemkin's almost royal service. He learned by dint of questioning that the admiral had made a gift to the various ship captains of certain jewels that were to be sold and the proceeds divided among the crews.

"Some say that Suvarof gave the things to Jones," whispered one of the flotilla officers. "He has no notion of values—that little grandfather—always gives everything away."

A search of the faces around the tables disclosed that Suvarof was not there, and Nassau, although he had a suspicion as to the source of the splendor that had appeared on the flagship, had no opportunity to mention it.

Jones stood up to give the first toast, and not a man there but expected that he would complement the Prince-Marshal by mentioning his name.

"Your Highness, my lords, *messieurs*, I give you a name that will stand in the pages of history when we are forgotten—one who is fortunate in being served by courageous men—" he glanced fleetingly at Nassau, his dark eyes mocking—"one who has achieved what other centuries failed to bring to pass, the downfall of the Turk in Europe; but who, gentlemen, is worthy of the homage placed at the feet of——"

He lifted his glass, bowing to Potemkin.

"The empress! *Messieurs*, I give you Catharine the Great."

Potemkin started in surprise and displeasure, but the Russians tossed down their wine and dropped the glasses over their shoulders, to shatter on the deck.

The innate courtesy that had inspired this toast to the woman who had shown not the least gratitude for his services stirred the approval of the officers. They braved Potemkin's growing dissatisfaction by accompanying Jones to the side of the *Vladimir* when it was time for him to enter his barge to go ashore.

They waited at the rail and then glanced at one another curiously. Nassau had given orders that no salute was to be fired when the American left his flagship.

Jones swept a glance along the deck, dwelt on the massed crew for a moment, and turned to the ladder, a smile at the edges of his lips. Edwards and Pierre were already in the boat.

A Cossack advanced from the waist of the ship, and it was a moment before Jones recognized Ivak, in his dress uniform, a red coat, trimmed with fur, polished black boots and a white ermine cap.

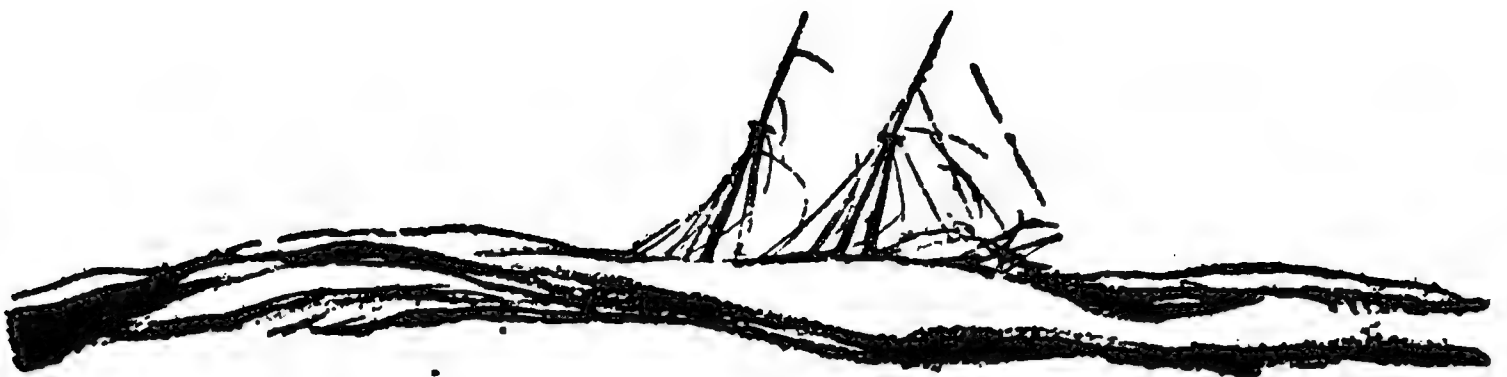
The *sotnik* pushed past the other officers and stood at salute. Then he brought his other arm in front of him and held out in both hands a sword. There was no mistaking the weapon, shaped like a simitar, with the diamonds flashing in the hilt, Suvarof's sword.

Not an officer present but would have given an arm to be its possessor—not Potemkin himself.

"The General, Prince Alexander Suvarof, presents his compliments and bids adieu to his friend, Paul Jones," Ivak said in Russian, raising his voice.

A murmur arose in the waist of the *Vladimir* and grew to a roar that was echoed by the crews of other ships who heard it. No one ordered, and no one could have suppressed it.

"Little Father Jones!"







# THE LONE RAIDER

by Thomson Burtis

Author of "The Indomitable Dub," "Some Afternoon Calls," etc.

**L**IEUTENANT FRANK GERSHWIN lay prone on top of the center section, the soles of his boots just visible to Lieutenant William Saunders, who was ensconced in the cockpit. A small army of soldiers, officers, their wives and daughters, newspapermen, photographers and others were massed on the "line" in front of the four corrugated iron hangars of Goddard Field. An attempt to make a new world's record for parachute jumping was about to be made, and it was an event of no mean importance to the huge artillery camp and the single squadron of Air Service troops which was attached to it.

Saunders took one last look at his instruments. Oil pressure twenty-five pounds, air pressure three, temperature seventy-five degrees Centigrade, voltmeter charging one, spark lever fully advanced, motor shutters open, altitude adjustment closed, both switches on, gas petcocks turned to the main tank—all the multitudinous things which an airman automatically thinks of passed through his mind in less than ten seconds. As the mechanics held the wings he ran the huge Liberty motor up to fifteen hundred revolutions a minute and heard it drum forth its rhythmical song of four hundred and fifty horsepower coming from twelve cylinders without a break or a miss. He drew back the throttle slowly and nod-

ded. In a trice the blocks were pulled from the wheels, the men had released the wings, and he was taxying up the steep grade to the highest edge of Goddard Field. Goddard Field was merely a hilly cow pasture on edge of Camp Henry, which had been utilized for a flying field.

He turned downhill, southward, and fed the Liberty the throttle. In ten seconds the ton-and-a-half De Haviland was speeding down the slope. Billy pushed forward on the stick until the nose came down, held it until the airspeed got to eighty miles an hour, and then took off in a mild zoom, straight from the ground. He cocked an eye at Gershwins's feet. Frank was in for a breezy hour, laying there on the top wing and holding on to the supports provided.

Round and round the little Kentucky air-drome the De Haviland went, circling widely as the altimeter crept upward. Two, three, five thousand feet. The Ohio River was in sight, northward. Northeast, thirty miles away in the big bend of the river, Louisville lay hidden under a dense pall of smoke. To the East and South, stretching away in apparently limitless expanse, were the Kentucky mountains—sinister, somehow, even under the smiling sunlight of a spring afternoon.

Billy had been born back in those hills, and knew them as none but a native could. Perhaps his comparatively few years in the

outside world had made him more sensitive to the swarming recollections of bloody feuds and dark degeneracy which they hid in their hollows—what he had taken for granted in his younger days now seemed more terrible, if that was possible, to him than to the ignorant outsiders who spoke with amazement of each new revelation that came from the back country. He never flew above them but what he thought about it.

He flew automatically. There was nothing to do but keep going up. If a new record was to be made, the specially prepared De Haviland must reach twenty thousand feet—four miles above the earth. Until they got above ten thousand feet it would remain uncomfortably warm. He, as well as Gershwin, was dressed for the below-zero temperature they would run into at higher altitudes.

Billy looked like a leather-coated *Mephistopheles* of the upper air. He was twenty-five, and in his wide-shouldered, long-legged body personified all that was physically best in the mountain people. Now, in close-fitting helmet, huge, protruding goggles, and a large assortment of sweaters under a suit of leather coveralls he looked like a giant. Behind the goggles his brown eyes were slightly narrow, and very keen and bright.

Below them were two deeply etched lines from nostrils to mouth that hinted at a far more advanced age than twenty-five. Seventeen years in the hills of Kentucky, including an active part, for two years, in the Saunders-Ballardson feud, had etched those lines there and made the lips so firm and repressed and narrowed those brooding brown eyes. Incidentally, there were two bullet scars in his left side as souvenirs, too.

Ten thousand feet. The field was only a pocket handkerchief now, and the vast area of Camp Henry, which could house sixty thousand soldiers, was covered by one wing. Louisville seemed only six or seven miles away. The cool air was more comfortable now.

"If I'd sweat any more the people on the ground would think it was raining," Billy soliloquized.

He wondered how Gershwin would make the last few thousand feet up there with his face exposed to the zephyrs, so to speak, without benefit of warm motor or protecting windshield. It was a strange thing, Billy reflected, that he should be handling the

ship, entrusted with the task of nursing it upward to its very limit, for the only man in the 188th Squadron whom he disliked. A few years ago he would have said "hated." In those days he would have attempted to hang Gershwin's nose on the back of his head long before this. Four years fighting his way through school and four more years of Army discipline had tamed some of the inherited ferocity that rioted in the Kentuckian's blood, however.

One thing he would have to hand to Gershwin, who was an observer. He might be a fat-headed fool; he might be, and was, a swaggering bully who took pleasure in climbing up on his first lieutenant's bars and imposing on those of lower grade, principally Second Lieutenant Billy Saunders; he might be a braggart and a man who thought that getting one German plane in France automatically put him up alongside all the heroes from Alexander to Foch; he might be the man who took pleasure in making Billy's life as unpleasant as possible because Billy was conceded to be one of the greatest acrobatic flyers in the Army; but he had "guts." And he was a steel-nerved parachute jumper, possessed of uncanny skill in slipping his 'chute and picking his landing-place.



FIFTEEN thousand feet, the altimeter said. The clothing was none too warm, now, and it was time to use the altitude adjustment for the carburetor, too. Soon it would be time to start getting position for the jump. The meteorological department had estimated the wind at different levels, and figured that if the jump was made from a point over the mountains ten miles southeast of Camp Henry Gershwin would land in the midst of the level, wide-spreading fields between Camp Henry and Louisville.

It was nervy of Gershwin to attempt to make a record in that country. Some miscalculation in windage or position might land him in the river, or in the woods. Either one would probably be fatal. A parachute is a dangerous thing on the ground. The wind can cause it to drag a man and break him to pieces, and in the water the harness, the huge silk umbrella, and the shroud lines from shoulder-harness to the edges of the 'chute combine to make an octopus seem an easy thing to get away from.

Seventeen thousand feet, and it was as cold as Pharaoh's heart. He felt as if his nose was freezing, and rubbed it energetically with one gauntleted hand. He was many miles back of the spot for the jump, but there was plenty of time. The ship was climbing very slowly through the thin upper air. Despite himself, he could not down a tiny hope that maybe the ship couldn't get high enough so that Gershwin could make a record. He'd be insufferable after the newspapers all over the world chronicled the thing.

But that didn't last long. He felt ashamed of himself. He'd do everything a pilot could to get the ship up as far as it would go without a supercharger, and he hoped Frank would get the record and not be hurt. Courage and daring will make up for a lot of things.

Eighteen thousand feet, and the strong winds of the upper air were tossing the ship. Frank would have a hot time dropping through that layer of air.

A terrific wrench twisted the ship. Billy handled stick and rudder automatically. Then, vaguely, he saw a dark mass pass over him. He snapped his head up—the feet were gone. Gershwin had already pulled off.

He looked back. The big umbrella was open, and Gershwin was swaying like a pendulum beneath it. As the pilot banked steeply and swept around toward him Billy was wondering what had happened. Gershwin wouldn't pull off without the signal. Why, they were only eighteen thousand feet—that was no record!

Then the explanation came to him. That terrific jerk must have either torn Gershwin's grip loose, or else in some way the ripcord had been pulled accidentally. That would open the tiny umbrella which in turn pulled the parachute itself loose from the back-pack in which it was folded.

As the De Haviland roared by Gershwin the powerful jumper's dark face was twisted into a sneer, and his arms described a gesture of total disgust and violent anger.

"He's blaming me, is he?" Billy thought hotly. "Nobody to blame but himself, the poor-jackass!"

Then he stopped in his mental flaying of his enemy. His tanned face seemed to freeze as he looked down. They were at least thirty miles back of the spot where the

jump should have been made. Below there was a far-rolling panorama of mountains and cliffs and ravines, threaded by tiny streams, with a very few isolated rocky fields. They were over the mountains—and Gershwin had only one chance in a million to land without maiming himself, at least. He would smash into trees, crash from limb to limb, the 'chute would catch in the top and he would hang there, helpless, probably with half his bones broken.

Gershwin was in that scrambled layer of air now. He was swaying dizzily. Often he was not below the 'chute at all, but swinging so far out that he was even with it. Twice he was actually above the frail silk umbrella which was all that held him three miles above the earth. Billy, his lean, high-cheek-boned face set and those lines etched deeply into it, watched that struggle with the elements as his ship kept ever circling around the parachute as a center.

Finally they dropped into quieter atmosphere, and Billy breathed once more. He surveyed the earth hopelessly. Southward there was one sizeable field, with a ruined cabin alongside it. That was where old "Pappy" Dorn had lived, a hermit till he died. But the wind was carrying Gershwin northward, of course, and the terrain was hopeless. Tiny clearings—only a miracle could make even a jumper like Gershwin, who could side-slip a 'chute in an uncanny way to hit his mark, land in one of those tiny fields.

There was another thing, too, to add to the dark, sullen, mocking Gershwin's plight. That was Ballardson Creek down there. A few miles northeast was Red Forks, the settlement which was the hub of the Ballardson clan. They were tough people to run into—moonshiners all. The Saunders ought to know. Billy's last two male relatives had been killed off in the Ballardson-Saunders feud.

Ten thousand feet, eight thousand, six thousand. Fifteen feet a second was the rate at which the parachute dropped. And every second of the time Gershwin was pantomiming his disgust and contempt. Billy was as red as fire, and his brown eyes held a dangerous flame in them as Gershwin signaled his feelings. Ever and anon he raised a clenched fist significantly.

If he ever came out alive life would be



pretty busy for a while at Camp Henry. Gershwin would blame everything on Billy, and even if the young Kentuckian whipped him, that would not solve matters. And Billy knew in his heart that he had not been at fault. Despite himself though he forgot his raw feelings in admiration of that indomitable quality in Gershwin which could allow him to forget his deadly plight for anything at all at a time like that. There was something almost epic in the man's taunts—as if death or injury were things to be forgotten, as unimportant.

Four thousand feet, three thousand. Sure as fate, Gershwin was going to land close to Ballardson Creek. Again Billy scrutinized the ground. Just one clearing now, within the area in which Gershwin would have to land. It was barely possible he could make it.

Then his eyes focused on a thin plume of smoke which lifted from the bushes. One of the Ballardsons' stills must be down there and running. His keen eyes probed the thick undergrowth. Yes, there was a shack there, well hidden.

He jammed the stick forward, and with singing wires and quivering struts the giant bomber roared downward. As he came closer, Billy saw two men lurking in the undergrowth. The inevitable rifles were in their hands.

Billy's mind was almost numb as Gershwin came within a thousand feet of the ground. It was a terrible ordeal to fly and watch a man go to almost certain death. Already he was slipping his 'chute—pulling down one side of it by means of the shroud-lines, to brake his forward speed. Even if the miracle should happen, what would those moonshiners do? They hated strangers, and a Government man was anathema. It was sure death for a revenue agent to be exposed in the Ballardson territory—and any stranger took his life in his hands. Captain Thomason's balloon had been shot down—

At that instant a wisp of smoke which did not come from the still gave the answer Gershwin spun a full turn. Another plume of smoke, and he hung limp in the air, dropping lifelessly downward.

Billy turned into a raving maniac. There were hot tears of consuming rage in his eyes, and his body was suddenly like ice. He knew them now—old Nathan Ballardson and his oldest son, Bret. Two of the worst

in the mountains, and that means a book-ful. They had shot the helpless Gershwin in the belief that the airplane was a spotter for stills and Gershwin a revenue man come down to get them. There had been talk of using airplanes for that purpose.

By an ironical twist of fate, Gershwin landed in a heap squarely in the middle of the tiny clearing alongside the creek. Bullets were zipping around the D. H., now, but the furious pilot paid them no heed. All the wild turbulence of his forebears was raging in his blood, and he would have enjoyed killing the Ballardsons with his bare hands.

He watched them carry Gershwin into the shack. If only he had machine-guns in his ship!

A plan took form in his mind—a mad plan, but right then Saunders took no count of odds. He had not even a gun. He banked around and opened the motor wide. Just high enough to clear the low-rolling hills he roared away toward Pappy Dorn's place.

As the first fury of the storm within him died away, there arose a struggle in his mind. A struggle between all the influences of his early life, the instincts in his blood, the traditions of a hundred years—and the superficial methods of thought which he had accustomed himself to so recently.

There is no motive stronger than the clan spirit of the mountaineer. Fight as they may among themselves, all the world outside, without exception, is inhabited by common enemies, to be fought shoulder to shoulder with internal dissension forgotten. Gershwin had been his enemy—so had the Ballardsons. But for one mountaineer to attempt to deliver another to the law was treason. Never again could he come home to the mountains. He would be killed like a rat, on sight—even Jim Kemp, his boyhood friend and member of the clan which had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Saunderses against the Ballardsons, would shoot him with grim satisfaction in having done a traitor to death. If he accomplished what he had in mind, he would be an out-cast, and it is not easy to give up one's home, no matter how mean and squalid it may have been. The mountains and their people still meant much to Billy—home, and home-folks. Nevertheless, eight years in the outside world had given him a new point of view.



AS THE ship barely cleared the ridge between the Ballardsons' still and Pappy Dorn's abandoned farm his mind was made up. Perhaps the fact that the Ballardsons, for all that the feud was now in abeyance, were traditional enemies of the Saunders might have helped shape his decision; that would be only natural. But Saunders would have gone after Jim Kemp under like circumstances, or his own uncle. He had changed from a mountaineer into an American.

The D. H. curved around the clearing, which was on a steep slope, while Billy scrutinized the ground. Smooth, covered with grass, no obstacles. It was small, but the uphill grade was a help and the wind so light that it made little difference. He circled around, pointed down toward the field, cut the throttle and made his glide. He hurried the Liberty occasionally to keep the spark-plugs clean of oil, but otherwise used only the speed of the glide. His instinctive flying sense was responsible for the accuracy of his landing—the bomber swept across the rough trail at the foot of the slope, cleared the bushes which separated the road from the clearing and thudded to the ground within ten feet of the lower edge. The steep grade was responsible for stopping the ship a safe distance from the trees on the upper edge.

He left the motor going until he got two logs to brace the wheels and keep the ship from rolling back downhill. Then he cut it, and removed his flying coveralls and divers coats and sweaters. He retained a chamois vest over his O. D. shirt, for he might be out all night and the air would be cool during the dark hours. His breeches and leggings were perfect equipment for a fifteen-mile scramble through the woods. Within five minutes after he had landed, the grim-faced young Kentuckian was on his way back toward the lair of the Ballardsons.

Although his scheme was a desperate one—an undertaking which no one, possibly, but a reckless scion of a pioneer breed might attempt—he had not cast aside all reason. He had flown very low, and up ridge would cut off all view of the plane, and whether he had landed or not, from the Ballardsons. Pappy Dorn's farm was several miles from the nearest house. It was very possible that no one of the Ballardsons would have the slightest idea that he had

landed. His knowledge of the mountains and his life-long training in navigating through the trackless forest would help him in attaining his objective.

He toiled steadily on, scrambling up steep mountainsides, climbing cliffs, fording creeks, keeping on his course as truly as a man with a compass could have. Overhead three airplanes, out to see what had become of Gershwin and the pilot and ship, were patrolling. They would see the ship, Billy reflected, and know that he was all right. They would have to wait a while to discover what had happened to poor Gershwin.

He was still five miles from his goal when darkness fell, and the ships went home. It was terrible work to proceed through the dead blackness. No one but a born mountain man could have done it. The mysterious noises of stirring night things came from the rustling bushes and whispering treetops, and it seemed that the night was full of eyes. A wildcat cried somewhere near, and there were tiny squeaks and other noises in continuous chorus. Billy slipped along steadily, like a helmeted demon of the night. And there was something in his face which made demon seem the correct word to describe him. He was like vengeance incarnate as he slipped through the shadows.

He finally reached Ballardson Creek, and worked his way southward along it. When he came to a sweeping curve, he knew that he was close to the still. He was depending on the fact that when a "run" of liquor is started, it does not cease, usually, for many hours. By all the laws of probability, the two Ballardsons should be there, unless they had been scared off. The latter was scarcely possible, however. In the mountain fastnesses of Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas the moonshiner feels safe. Agents rarely get close to the back-country stills. They can't navigate the roads and trails very long before they're discovered. Whether or not the airplane had discovered the still, the Ballardsons would figure, it would be many days before action could be taken, and then there would be ample warning. The immediate menace, Gershwin, they had killed.

The night was black as pitch. Billy wormed his way along, as silently as a ghost. Snakes slithered away from his path, and ever and anon some startled

rabbit or chipmunk darted through the undergrowth. A hundred yards from the cabin he was reassured—the still was in operation, and dim light shone through the chinks in the log walls.

That last hundred yards was one long ordeal. It took a half hour to negotiate it. One of the Ballardsons might be out in the night somewhere on guard. Might have a bead on him right now—no, that was scarcely possible. They would feel perfectly safe. What revenue men could even get close to them hidden away out in the forest?

Finally Billy had his eye to a chink in the rough cabin wall. The small still was in full blast. The “shine” was coming steadily from the worm. Nathan Ballardson, tall, gaunt, with tobacco-stained beard and cheeks sunken for lack of teeth, was stirring the mash. Bret, as tall as his father but straight as a poplar tree, was watching the run. With his long, pointed face, marked by sharply receding forehead and chin, and small, deepset eyes set close to a beaklike nose, he looked like a bony bird of prey. Father and son were both filthy dirty—sweat-stained hickory shirts, home-made galluses, and overalls caked with muck.

There are fine, upstanding people in the mountains, who are fundamentally of the same straight-grained breed as the pioneers of bygone days, and there are also inbred degenerates who represent all that is worst in ignorance, squalor and depravity. Of this latter class were the Ballardsons. Billy felt an unquenchable disgust as he looked at them, and some of the old feud spirit rioted within him. They seemed like a pair of unclean buzzards as they moved silently about their work.

Two rifles were stacked in one of the opposite corners, within four feet of the door. Billy located them, and then crept laboriously around the cabin. It took him fifteen minutes to get close to the door, but he had not made a sound. He jumped nervously as he heard the elder man's voice.

“Better light another candle, Bret. Thet thar one is about done,” he said.

The wan light of the one candle was supplemented for a moment by a fresh one. Then the first one was snuffed out.

The door was closed. Was it possible that they had it fastened in some way? It did not seem probable, but if they did—it possibly meant the end of Billy Saunders.

He did not dare try it first. He must burst in on them, and have them covered before they could move.

He was quivering like a racehorse at the barrier as he poised in front of the door, his hand within an inch of the crude latch.

Suddenly he sprang into action. He gasped with relief as the door flung open under his hand, and the next second he had leaped inside and had one of the rifles in his hand.

“Put 'em up, you Ballardsons!” he shouted triumphantly.

They were studies in pure terror. His uniform meant something unutterably, mysteriously terrifying to them—he knew that. Then the old man, his upthrust hands quivering, recoiled a step.

“Willy Saunders!” he breathed, and his eyes were those of a cornered rat.

“Thet thar feud-fight o' ourn is over, Willy,” began Bret, his eyes shifting rapidly, “and——”

“Yes, it's over! But you shot that fellow in the parachute, and you're both going down to Louisville with me and you're going to dance on the end of a rope. Bret, get that rope in the corner and tie your pappy up with it. And tie him right!”

“That felluh ain't shotten to death, Willy,” said the old man eagerly, like a fawning dog. “Bret an' I took him down thar t' Red Forks. He ain't dead nohow. I tell ye——”

“How much's he hurt?” demanded Billy, his face like stone in its frame of leather. He had not removed his helmet.

“Left arm, right leg, an' one in the side—nothin' but flesh wounds. We thought you was after us up thar.”

“So you shot him, tried to shoot me, and now you're wondering whether to murder him or not. That's what you'd do, you dirty, double-crossing, murdering hounds! I don't understand why you haven't already. Think I believe you'd let him get out of these mountains alive? Let him start, maybe—and then pot him from behind a tree. Tie your pappy up, Bret!”

The evil face of the old man was a study in mingled fear and malevolence as he cringed before the blazing young flyer.

“I know you Saunders folks. You talk about killin'. You're usin' this to start the feud again, and yuh'll kill Bret an' me——”

“It'd save the trouble of taking you to Louisville, at that,” rejoined Billy cruelly.



He watched Bret tie his father's wrists behind his back.

"Now carry him out. I'll bring some more rope," ordered Billy, his mind busy with a new scheme which had become necessary since the good news that Gershwin still lived.

It was a wonder they hadn't killed him immediately. Perhaps they were lying. If they were, Bret Ballardson would never live to see the morning, he decided.

They hid the old man in the bushes, and Bret, under Billy's orders, tied his feet securely.

"Now you and I are going to Red Forks, you're going to talk pretty to somebody because my gun's going to be right in your ribs, and we're going to have Gershwin started for Crawfordsville for the six o'clock train," he told the gangling young mountaineer.

"Then you'll let pappy and me go?" demanded Bret eagerly, stopping his jaws momentarily.

"No; but you won't hang for it if he isn't dead, so cheer up."

"You gonna deliver us over to the law?"

"You're — right."

"May God's curse fall on yuh, Will Saunders, for goin' back on your own! Enemies we be to each other, but you——"

"Shut up!" ordered Billy, "and lead the way to the shack."



THEY followed the trail to the squalid collection of cabins and one store which was Red Forks. Bret, his shoulders slumped hopelessly, had said that his cousin, Zeb, had a buckboard and a horse. Gershwin was quartered in Zeb's shack.

Billy gave Bret detailed instructions as they walked toward Red Forks.

"And the first word you say that's wrong—just make a sudden move that looks suspicious to me—and I'll drill you and then take my chance in the woods!" he concluded, and there was no doubt that he meant what he said. The Ballardsons had reason to know that the Saunderses did not bluff.

It made the goose flesh come out on Billy's body, and a wild thrill go through him to sneak into the lair of the Ballardsons under the circumstances. The slightest miscue would mean the end of him. The settlement was quiet as death, not a light

showing. Billy concealed himself in some undergrowth close to the back door of the rickety shack which was their destination, and with a last warning to Bret settled himself to listen.

It was not hard to awaken the household. Zeb, a middle-aged man with a discouraged mustache, came to the door. He had evidently slept in his clothes. Bret spoke distinctly, carrying out his instructions.

"Pappy says for to git out the buckboard an' take that feller down to Crawfordsville fur the mornin' train," he said. "He kin travel all right, an' he tol' us he wouldn't talk none if we let 'im go. He will, but Pappy an' I'll hide out a while till it blows over. He's Army, an' we might hev the hull Army on us if we keep him. Start quick, Zeb, an' travel slow so's not tuh hurt 'im."

"How kin I put 'im on the train?" He'll talk——"

"No, he won't. Tell 'im it's his only chance tuh git away. Iffen he does, you ain't in it. You didn't shoot him. It's pappy an' me."

Bret was carrying out his instructions to the letter. Billy had foreseen all the obstacles which might arise. In a few minutes Bret came the few steps to where Billy was lying, and they slipped away. It must have been gall and wormwood to the lanky outlaw to be compelled to leave his own stronghold and friends, bound for jail, all because of a Saunders—and a gun. Billy, his spirits soaring now, allowed himself a few wide grins as they left Red Forks and all its sinister possibilities behind. He took the first good breath he had inhaled for some time when they were safely on their way through the black forest.

Bret was walking ahead, the gun muzzle within two feet of him. Billy had become somewhat accustomed to the *status quo*, so to speak, and was not keeping as alert as he had been formerly. He figured Bret was fully aware of his position, and the last thought in his mind was that the mountaineer might start something, under the conditions.

Nevertheless, he did; perhaps because he thought a bullet would be preferable to what lay ahead if he submitted entirely.

Halfway back to the still, without giving the slightest warning of his intention, he whirled like a flash and knocked the muzzle of the gun aside. Billy, taken utterly by

surprise, did not have time to shoot. Had it been daylight, he would have been prepared, but in the darkness Bret's action was almost invisible until the Army man felt the muzzle knocked aside. The next second Bret had twisted the gun from Billy's grasp.

The dead blackness of the night helped Billy now, as it had Bret before. Instinctively he leaped toward the thick undergrowth, before Bret could get the gun switched around to shoot. With the bullets zipping and whining around him, the young pilot zigzagged through the trees.

Finally he heard Bret's rapid footsteps, running up the trail toward Red Forks.

For a few seconds Billy could think of nothing save his own failure. He reviled himself bitterly. With success in his grasp—

Perhaps it was yet, he thought swiftly. Bret was making all speed toward Red Forks. Once there, he would arouse the town to pursue the audacious young man who had dared invade the sanctity of their stronghold, and dispatch some one after old Nathan. Then Ballardson himself, or some messenger, would start out to overtake the slow-moving buckboard which held Zeb and Gershwin.

Billy, in his mood of bitter anger at himself, was ready for anything, no matter how desperate. Eluding his pursuers meant nothing to him alongside of getting Gershwin on that train for Louisville. At a dead run he set out for the road which connected Red Forks and Crawfordsville. Fifteen minutes later he was ensconced in the bushes alongside the rutty pike. A sturdy log, three inches thick and four feet long, was in his hand. Red Forks was but a mile away.

He had not long to wait. He had forecast what Bret Ballardson's procedure would be in this instance, at any rate. The rapid thud of a galloping horse's hooves gave ample warning of the rider's approach. Billy crouched, the log ready. The moon was peeping above the horizon now and gave ample light.

At just the right moment he leaped into the road, and before the astonished rider could swerve his mount a sweeping blow from the crude weapon in Billy's hand sent him spinning to the ground. The horse galloped off down the trail.

Billy landed on his victim without delay, and got his gun from him. He was con-

scious, though badly shaken, and he was Bret Ballardson.

"Got you again, did I?" crowed Billy, boyish satisfaction filling him. "Get up, mister, and let's go. We'll have to leave your father, but we'll get him later if it takes the whole Army!"

He tied Bret's hands behind him, this time, which made the ensuing ten-mile walk a very tough journey for the mountaineer. Billy hurried him along mercilessly, once again holding the man's own gun over him. Never had he lived through anything like the continuous strain of those hours, when it seemed that a horde of Ballardsons might spring out at him at any moment. They would be bound to figure he had landed the airplane somewhere. Otherwise he could not have been at the still so soon after the shooting. It would not be hard to pick Pappy Dorn's field as the place. Perhaps they were making a beeline for there.

It was five o'clock in the morning when they arrived at the ship. Ballardson was utterly exhausted. Billy was red-eyed from lack of sleep, and his face was as pale as a ghost's. It had been a night which had tested every drop of vitality in his wiry body.

He secured Ballardson more effectually with the belt from his flying coveralls, and strapped him in the back seat. It took ten minutes to start the Liberty, for it was cold and self-starters on motors of that size are not too efficient. Billy kept one eye on the woods and another on his instruments as he warmed the motor. He would not have been surprised to hear a shot at any moment—or feel one, for that matter.

Finally he was ready. The ship trundled the few yards to the top of the rise, swept around, and roared down the slope like a thundering prehistoric monster. He stole a look at Ballardson, in the back seat. The mountaineer was ashen-faced and trembling, and in his eyes was such cringing terror as Billy had never seen before.

They took the air safely, and ten minutes later the De Haviland was circling over the terrain which had been the scene of last night's activities. Billy laughed aloud—although neither he nor any one else could hear the hilarity—as he saw a dozen men trailing through the woods. At sight and sound of the ship all of them started shooting, but a hundred miles an hour is too fast for even a Kentuckian's shooting.

A buckboard with two men in it, drawn by a white horse, was just going into Crawfordsville. Billy dived steeply, got low enough to see, and made sure it was Gershwin and his escort. He circled and waited, watching the scene below. Not until he saw Gershwin lifted on the train in front of a mob which apparently comprised every citizen of the town did he cease his surveillance. They were excited down there, and nearly breaking their necks trying to watch the airplane and the wounded man at one and the same time. The whole territory looked absurdly small from the air—Godard Field was only twenty minutes away by airplane. Last night it had seemed—and figuratively was, from a ground point of view—at the other end of the world.

He roared back over the small aviation field as every available pilot was preparing to take off on patrol to look for Gershwin.



THE parachute expert was in the hospital only two weeks. By the time he returned to duty old Nathan Ballardson had been run to earth by a

posse of over a hundred men, assisted by airplanes, and had joined Bret in jail, awaiting trial.

Billy sedulously avoided Gershwin, scarcely knowing why he did. He knew that the observer had asked that he, Billy, be his pilot on the next attempt at a record. It seemed that there was new humility in the man, as if the ordeal through which he had passed had shown him how easily he could be knocked off his perch. He was comparatively subdued, and silent, and his new attitude did not seem to be assumed.

Finally, one Saturday noon when the fliers were getting washed, polished and highly perfumed for a week-end in town, the big, dark-faced observer came into Billy's suite.

"Going in?" he asked awkwardly.

"Uh-huh. You?"

"Yep. Great musical show at MacCauley's, they say, and I know a couple of the girls. I've got a couple of seats. Want to go?"

"Sure thing, Frank."

## CAPTAINS OF ADVENTURE

by Josiah M. Ward

**S**ONORA, Mexico, was the objective of a number of filibustering expeditions prior to William Walker's famous invasion of Nicaragua. In fact Walker was on his way to Sonora when stopped in Lower California. The failure of many bold adventurers to pick up bushel baskets of gold in California in the days of 1849 sent them rampaging in every direction, and Sonora presented a special lure because it was an old settled region, and marvelous tales were told of its mineral wealth.

Two Frenchmen of noble birth who were stranded in California successively endeavored to carve out an empire from this supposed El Dorado and both lost their lives in the venture.

First came Marquis Charles de Pindry of Poitou who set forth with two hundred followers and was murdered in his sleep

at Cocospera. Next came Count Gaston Raoul de Rousset-Bourbon of Provence who was executed by Mexican soldiery, August 12, 1853.

It was a pity that de Rousset was cut off before he brought his scheme of empire to fruition. He was a fascinating type of the soldier of fortune, but he had a fatal weakness—he loved all beautiful and romantic women. The last one to receive his gallant devoirs detained him until an overwhelming Mexican force surrounded his little army of two hundred and forty Americans. After a valiant resistance the Americans were defeated and de Rousset captured.

"*Allons, mes braves,*" he said to the firing squad in a clear, cheerful voice. "Do your duty! Fire true—aim at the heart!"

A volley cracked. Count de Rousset-Bourbon fell dead.





# THE CASK *by* Rolf Bennett

Author of "The Barrier," "Yellow Jack," etc.

**W**E WERE sitting on a bench facing the sea, the man with the gold earrings and myself. Neither of us had spoken and we were content to bask silently in the afternoon sun, till our peace was disturbed by a couple of small boys who started to chase each other round our bench. They continued this sport for some moments, and then the man with the gold earrings roused himself.

"Belay and avast, you young lubbers!" he roared in a voice like a gale of wind. "Away with you, d'you hear, or I'll catch and careen and lambast you!"

Frightened by the terrifying voice, probably, rather than by the words, the youngsters fled precipitately. The man smiled grimly and turned to me.

"If there's anything that's tougher than leather, noisier than a steam-winch, more mischievous than a monkey and with more lives than a cat, it's a boy," he remarked. "They ain't precious," he went on meditatively, "nor rare, nor ornamental to the eye—not to my way of thinking. They're just inja-rubber gifted with an appetite."

He drew a pipe from his pocket, filled and lighted it.

"Of course, there's boys and boys, bad and worse," he resumed when he had made sure that his pipe was drawing well, "but

for sheer, all-round cussedness, ships' boys have the rest clean beat, believe me. Maybe it's the ozone that stings them, or maybe it's the lashing of grub they eat, but whatever it is, they're the contrariest little swabs ever born without tails to swing by.



"I'LL tell you. There was one, I remember, aboard a trading schooner called the *Marquesan Belle*, and his name was Joe, though most times he didn't answer to anything so polite as that—oh, no. Well, he was a proper little cuss and had a come-back for everything but the bosun's rope end, and he'd even got so used to that that he had a hard job to put up a respectable howl. But there was one man who could put the fear of the Lord into Joe, and that was the skipper.

"He was a rum 'un, was this skipper, I tell you. His name was Jonas Bligh. There wasn't a port from Honolulu 'way down south to Macquarie where you wouldn't hear tales of Captain Bligh. Queer tales they were too, and some of them as good as true. You see, he had a hobby, and that hobby was collecting stones and rocks and shells and that sort of junk. Mad on stones, he was, and they say his house was chock full of them—like a museum. He called himself a geologer, but most people called him crazy, and he was known as

'Luny' Bligh from one side of the Pacific to the other.

"But about that boy Joe. Now just to show you. On the last trip she ever made, the *Marquesan Belle* struck foul weather soon after leaving Tahiti. It was a proper ripsnorter and the wind it blew big guns. Well, it was soon all hands to the pumps, for she'd started her planking, and pump the hands did, night and day; watch on, watch off. When at last the weather started to ease up a bit it was too late to save the schooner. So the skipper orders the mate to put a barrel of biscuits and a keg of water in the only sound boat left and then lower away. They did it and lay alongside for the old man.

" 'We're waiting on you, sir!' yells the mate, for he was in mortal dread that the schooner would founder before they'd got clear away.

" 'All right,' answers Captain Bligh. 'Which of them barrels is the one with my specimens in, Mr. Mate?'

" 'We ain't no room for specimens!' yells the mate. 'We're down by the gun'le as it is.'

" 'Don't worry,' says the skipper. 'I hear you, but I got to find that barrel of specimens.'

"The mate didn't dare sheer off, but the things he said about them specimens—lumps of rock and suchlike—was such that I won't repeat. So there they were, grappled to the schooner and she settling deeper every minute, while Luny Bligh searched for his barrel of specimens.

" 'I think I got it, Mr. Mate, the one with the white paint splash on it,' he sings out. 'Stand by from under!'

"He hoists the barrel on to the taffrail and the others helped him lower it into the boat, swearing terrible all the time.

" 'Now jump, sir, for the Lord's sake!' yells mate, for the schooner's decks were almost awash.

" 'Plenty of time yet,' answers the skipper. 'There's a box of minerals I want to save.'

"And they were the last mortal words he ever did say, for just then the schooner gave a lurch and down she went like a lump of pig iron and down with her went Luny Bligh, specimens, minerals and all."

The man with the gold earrings paused to take the pipe from his mouth and ram the tobacco down.

"So that was the end of his geologizing," he went on. "And there was the mate and three men and Joe in the boat with a keg of water, a barrel of biscuits and a cask of Luny Bligh's stones. They drifted about for days and days and never a sail nor a smudge of smoke did they see. Pull they did not, for what was the use? They hadn't neither compass nor chart, so there was no sense in wearing themselves out at the oars. They just lay in the bottom of the boat with a tarpaulin stretched across to keep the sun off, and sweated and swore.

" 'You can keep a lookout, Joe,' says the mate. 'You're young and won't feel the heat so much as us.' "

"So young Joe cocks himself up in the bows and stares and stares and stares, north, south, east and west, and nothing does he see but blue water. Not a speck else, only the blue water and the blue sky and the sun beating down. At night he crawled under the tarpaulin with the rest, but soon as it was daylight he had to clear out.

" 'Keep your eyes skinned, boy,' says the mate. 'You're the youngest and the tenderest, remember, and you'll be the first to go,' he says.

"That was only by way of a joke, but it didn't cheer Joe up very much. So he watched and watched till he was almost blinded by the blaze of sunlight on the sea and his eyes felt as if they were dropping out of his head. One of the men, a Swede, went crazy and jumped overboard, and the others were mostly unconscious. So they went on drifting, getting thirstier and hungrier and weaker till they had hardly the strength to groan.

"Joe, he still managed to keep a sort of lookout because he was the youngest and hadn't forgotten the mate's joke. And about every half hour, till his voice gave out, the mate croaked to him—

" 'Got your eyes skinned, boy?'

" 'Yes, sir.'

"Right! You keep them skinned or, b'gee, I'll fetch you one with the boathook and all.'

" 'Yes, sir.'

" 'And none of your back answers, boy, or I'll do it now.'

" 'Aye, aye, sir.'

"And then the mate would feel for the boathook, but being so weak he couldn't raise it. So he just lay there and cussed



Joe in as many different lingoos as you'll hear in a Valparaiso drink saloon.

"Well, at last even Joe got too weak to keep a lookout and just tumbled down with the rest in the bottom of the boat. And there the four of them lay and drifted and drifted, and day and night was one and the same to them. Then one morning Joe was roused by the feel of water splashing on his face. Rain, thinks he, and sticks out his tongue to catch the drops. But it wasn't rain, it was just sea water, and he could have cried, Joe could, with disappointment only there wasn't enough damp in him to make the weeps.

"The water still splashed over the boat, which was dancing about like a cork in a windy puddle. It roused the mate and he managed to drag himself up so as to see over the gun'le.

"'B'gee,' says he, though his voice wasn't more than a cracked and husky whisper, 'b'gee,' he says, 'we're in among the breakers!'

"And they were so. The boat had got among some reefs and the mate knew it wouldn't be long before she went to pieces. It wasn't even as long as he thought it would be. Wallop! She struck the reef and then *bang! bang! bang!* she was at it again. No boat could stand much of that, and sure enough she went to pieces and Joe and the rest found themselves in the water, ten fathoms of it at a guess.

"It's wonderful what you can do when you must. Those chaps hadn't enough strength to swear, but when they were in the water they started to swim, all except one who couldn't—but then he was a dago. He went down, he did. '*Madre de Dios*,' he says, or something like that, and then he went.

"They made the shore, they did; Joe, the mate and the other man, on what looked to be a little island and a mighty poor one at that. It was rocky and bare except for salt bush and prickly cactus. Well, they scrambled up the beach and hadn't gone very far when the mate suddenly dropped on his knees in front of a little rock puddle just above high-water mark—that's how he knew it must be fresh water. But the other man, his name was Bob Fitch, he saw it too.

"'Out of that,' says he to the mate. 'We're all equal now and I saw that water first.'

"'You're a liar,' says the mate. 'You wait and take your turn,' says he.

"But Bob was afraid the mate would lap it all up if he had first go, and the mate was afraid likewise of Bob, so they caught hold of each other and started to struggle, but being so weak they couldn't do much else but roll about on the sand. Neither would let the other have first drink, though each was dying of thirst. But they'd clean forgot Joe, and while they were trying to settle the matter according to their own ideas, he'd spotted the puddle. By the time he'd finished there was only about half a pint left and the mate and Bob had at last agreed to each drink by turns, each turn not to last more than the time it took the other to count twenty out loud.

"And then they saw that Joe'd been and lapped up most all the water while they were scrapping and arguing—and there wasn't two madder men in all the seven seas. They drank what was left and that gave them strength to tell Joe what would happen if ever they got hold of him.

"'You'll come to a bad end,' said the mate. 'You'll die at the expense of the government, you will,' he says.

"'That's a fact,' says Bob, 'and I hope I'll be there to see the hanging.'

"Well, they didn't find any more water and the days went on and they tried eating the prickly cactus and the salt bush and even seaweed. But it didn't go down well and it wasn't very nourishing. Then one day the mate saw a cask bobbing about in the water. He and Bob waded in and tried to grab it, but the pair of them was nearly sucked down by the undertow and all but drowned. Then the mate thought of Joe.

"'Here, boy,' says he—and it was the first friendly word he'd spoken to him since they'd been on the island—'go and fetch that cask.'

"'No fear I won't,' answers Joe. 'Go fetch it yourself. I don't want to get drowned.'

"'Drowned,' says the mate; 'you won't never get drowned—not so long as there's six feet of rope left in the world.'

"While they were arguing the point, the mate and Joe, the cask got washed up near enough for Bob to get a hold of it. Then he and the mate dragged it up beyond reach of the tide—a mighty tough job, I may tell you, for the cask was heavy and they were as weak as kittens. And when they'd got



it high and dry, they saw it had a white paint splash on it.

"Well—what would you have said if you'd been them? They said it and a lot more that, maybe, you'd not understand, the mate and Bob did, for what was the use of a cask filled with stones and shells to men who were dying of thirst and starvation? It was a mighty poor sort of joke, that, and every time they looked at the cask, they cursed it and Luny Bligh and geologizing and the *Marquesan Belle* and Joe. They didn't even have the heart or the strength to heave stones at it. And the very next day, Bob Fitch went and got drowned by falling off the reef while he was looking for clams. So there was only the mate and Joe left.

"Two days after that the mate took his discharge and so Joe was the only one left. Not that he knew much about it, because he was mighty near the edge himself. Now and again he'd wake up and look round to see if there was a sail, more by way of habit than because he had any hopes. Once, when he was doing that, he chanced to look at the cask which was still lying where the

mate and Bob had left it—and he noticed that it looked wet. Now that was precious queer, mark you, for the sun was blazing down like fury and the sand was as dry as a ship's biscuit.

"So Joe drags himself to the cask and what do you think he finds? He finds the cask *leaking*! Leaking good fresh water! For it hadn't got rocks and specimens in it at all. The skipper had made a mistake and heaved the wrong cask into the boat; there wasn't any doubt about it. And that saved Joe's life, for he managed to live on fresh water and clams and what-not till a pearling schooner happened along and took him off."

The man with the gold earrings ceased speaking and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"There's just one thing I'd like to know," I said as he rose from the bench. "Did the boy Joe meet with the fate the mate had prophesied for him?"

"It's a bit too early to say yet," replied the man. "But," he added grimly, "if he gets asked many fool questions like that, the odds are he will."

## ORATIO OBLIQUA

by F. R. Buckley

**ONE** of the most unpleasant duties in royal courts of the middle ages—and later—was the breaking of bad news to the sovereign; not only unpleasant, in fact, but actually dangerous. Monarchs had not then arrived at the state of enlightenment which they are alleged to have reached nowadays. They really believed themselves to be as described in their titles—God-Appointed, Ever-Victorious, and so on. And, often being in point of character either unmitigated physical brutes or feeble-minded results of inbreeding, they experienced the reactions of ill-bred children when their vanities or their purses were touched. On receipt of bad news, they felt like smashing something; and the most obvious something was the messenger. To dash out the kneeling man's brains with a mace or slash his head

off with a sword was a most convenient and logical method of revenging one's royal self on the nasty old world.

The fear of death is the real mother of invention. The courtiers' messages are sometimes masterpieces of hinting.

Witness the method of informing a French king that his supposedly invincible navy had been vanquished by the English under most humiliating circumstances.

The court jester took a cup of wine and asked the king to drink to the confusion of the cowardly English.

"Cowardly?" asked the king.

"Yes," said the jester. "They have so proved themselves in a sea-battle. For when your brave Normans jumped out of their ships into the sea, the English dared not follow them."



# SHERIFF DURAND DEPUTES by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "The Word of a Hard Man," "French Harp Bill," etc.

**G**EORGE DURAND, sheriff of Rimrock County, regarded himself with depression and disgust. His constituents were feeling sorry for him, and his best friends were going up and down, making excuses for him. Everybody liked him, and the number of admirers he had gave him a large and continuous majority over his would-be successors.

Some one, well masked and so arrayed that he hadn't been identified, had ridden into Flapjack on a horse wholly concealed in a purple stain of red berries, and dismounting at the Badland Drovers' Bank had walked in and under such emphasis as a beautifully blued revolver gives had filled a wheatbag half full of currency, bonds and other valuables—including two or three automatics and revolvers kept at hand for emergencies—and then had ridden away again.

The tracks led into Five-Way Forks of Rippling Creek, where, with six ways to wade, the desperado had disappeared. On his track back into the Bad Lands, they had found quarts of crushed berries, used in staining the animal the ridiculous color—which would be lost after five minutes vigorous use of soap, water and a burlap bag, or other combination of dirt-remover.

Stealing the bank's money was bad enough. Such things do happen, in even

the most sedate and consequential communities. Here in Flapjack, with every house containing a he-man, so to speak, the only excuse for the getaway was that lately the State had made felons of all the people who carried or possessed or even hankered after short weapons, fit for pocket, hip and under-shoulder use. No one already a felon cared a whoop about such a law. On the contrary, the felons rejoiced in it, for without elevating them, it reduced a lot of normally law-abiding citizens to the snoop and sneak condition—if they kept their weapons. Lots of them surrendered their pistols and revolvers to Sheriff Durand, and he felt more lonely and miserable the more he had of weapons.

"Roaring Sam" Kimme came in, to the astonishment of Sheriff Durand, and surrendered, to wit:

Two .45 caliber, six shot, 7½ inch barreled revolvers.

Two .38 caliber six shot, four inch barreled revolvers.

Two .45 caliber 10-shot sliding barrel automatics.

Two .22 caliber rimfire automatics, practice weapons.

Holsters, with slots for hanging on 3-inch leather belts. Ammunition to the sum of twenty-nine pounds, for the same assorted.

"Why — you! What's this?" Sheriff Durand demanded.

"Oh, them's my peacemakers." Roaring Sam grinned an evil smile, "They made peace with lots who's quit trouble-making; now they's making peace between me'n you on account of the legality that is provided for when I surrenders them. Get the point?"

"Huh!" the sheriff grunted.

"I was always peaceable, law-abiding and independent!" Roaring Sam went on. "Henceforward, you got to hand it to me, I'm legal, the same as in the past. Ain't that so?"

"Well, we never did get to hang you—yet—that's a fact, Sam," the sheriff acknowledged without smiling.

"Nor even jailing me, except when it was non-bailable, between arrest and trial, followed by acquittal." Roaring Sam went into details, mildly. "Ain't that so?"

"Yes," Sheriff Durand admitted grumpily.

"You thought, when this law came, that you'd get me convicted by it, but you ain't, now, have you?" Roaring Sam rubbed it in. "You said as much down to the court house, the other day—an' I heard of it. Give me a receipt for them guns, sheriff. While you're writing, lemme remark, I ain't disarmed. I still got most of my teeth, besides a nice .30-30 carbine an' such."

"I know," Durand nodded. "You come clear in three murder trials, and some felonious assaults. I'm glad you've retired from business."

"Retired—heh!" The fighter grimaced. "I'm jes' tellin' yo', ain't I, that I don't give a whoop if yer prejudiced ag'in me! I'm law-abidin', an' if anybody treads on me I takes care of myse'f, don't I, now?"

The sheriff made no reply, but put the guns away, in a wheat bag, tied up and properly labeled. The surrender of the guns was but a trick. Durand knew that of all deadly and difficult characters, the bad man-killer is the slickest and meanest to handle. The ostentatious surrender of the weapons, instead of throwing them into the creek mud was a point gained for the next murder trial. Roaring Sam was crafty; he was paving the way for his next trial; he would have a broad highway of innocence of intention, inclination and ideas established—behind which to ambuscade some enemy, and Durand wondered if the scoundrel would not seek to kill him.

There was no telling. Roaring Sam was

just that crafty. He was called Roaring because of his braggart talk. But no truth, no square and outright statement of fact, ever came from those twisting, snarling, curling lips. He was the personification of a lie, a poison, killing, inescapable lie by means of which men are killed, and the fact of brutal murder covered with the moss and fallen leaves of apparent self-defense.

Roaring Sam swaggered out into the street in his leather chaps, his Mexican jacket and his wide, gray nutria hat. He was well satisfied with himself. He already knew the man who needed killing. A man had come into the washed-down prairie and claimed some six hundred and forty acres of grazing lands, homesteading it according to law, but entirely disregarding the fact that the several bottoms and tracts of plateau, or rather buttes, were part and parcel of Roaring Sam's grazing country, where he had some three or four thousand head of cattle. The homestead was an insult to the old-timer.

Roaring Sam was going to kill that homesteader, as sure as fate. The homesteader didn't know it; nobody knew it; even the sheriff, for all his prescience, didn't know that Willie Cuttyank was the destined victim. The sheriff just knew somebody would be killed in atrocious murder—and the case would be tried on evidence that would prove Roaring Sam plumb peaceable and the intended victim of a scoundrel bushwhacker.

That was the condition; a nice, fresh, successful bank robbery, and a man-killer of hideous success in a chosen pastime of brutal murder still at large. Sheriff Durand sighed at the thought of a law which gave Roaring Sam an opportunity to expose and spread abroad, and print upon the legal records, the fact of his absolute law-abiding intentions.



SHERIFF DURAND thought the robbery and surrender of weapons made just two events too much for one week. He could have braced himself against the onslaught of one or the other, but to have two such things practically together made him cringe. The robber was a stranger. No one knew him, and there was no suspect in the affair. He might be local talent, or he might be some one who had come from afar. Riding out on the tracks, Sheriff Durand made but one



discovery which he thought was important. The berry juice disguise and the water-covered trail were evidences of a wild and crafty disposition.

Durand did make a circuit and studied the tracks of Roaring Sam's horses. There was a chance, a barest possibility, that the rich old rancher had been in a hilarious and devastating mood, and robbed the bank for a joke. But at the hour of the hold-up Roaring Sam was sitting on the rail watching his cowboys drive a thousand head of his Owl Head Brand cattle through the dip. Roaring Sam wasn't the robber.

The blow to Durand's pride, having his friends sorry for him and explaining what can never be explained—a law officer's failure to protect property, life and maintain the peace—was the harder to bear because the friends were in earnest.

Sheriff Durand rode out thirty miles in his automobile and where the highway rode up between Twin Buttes he turned around to look back over the vast plains, and across into the Bad Lands down where Roaring Sam lived, and where two of his three victims were buried—where probably others no one knew about were buried, and where another might any day disappear.

Probably Roaring Sam would do his next murder or two in secret, hiding the evidence. People said he had killed a dozen men, and two or three boys—just a wanton old murderer with money enough to hire the best attorneys in the land. Durand wanted to wind up his career with a hanging or at least a life sentence. Looking down into the vast basin of the prairies and Bad Lands, Sheriff Durand had the inspiration for which he had hoped.

"That homesteader is his next victim!" Durand caught his breath. "He's getting ready to kill Cuttyank. —! I ought to have known!"

He saw the homesteader the following afternoon, a Saturday. Willie Cuttyank was small, humped-up and broken-shouldered, fairly foundered, so to speak. As he came down the street, driving his rattling old flivver, no more insignificant little man could have been seen. Durand watched him in pity. He saw Willie come out of his car, and he caught his breath with astonishment. For a moment, Willie had displayed a curious, slithering agility, but he dog-trotted up into the Flapjack Mercantile, a deferential and even piteous figure,

his shoulder being hung down so far by some hurt, no doubt. Sheriff Durand whispered to himself. Cuttyank was disguised. He was perhaps the bandit?

No use to alarm the intended victim of Roaring Sam. That would be needlessly cruel! Instead, Sheriff Durand looked up the settler's folk, back east. This wasn't difficult to do, when one knows the postmaster and the postmaster's clerk and has been on good terms with the two greatest detective agencies in the world for several terms of office.

Sheriff Durand learned a good deal about Willie Cuttyank. He was glad he had gone to all that trouble, for the fellow had something more in mind than a great hope of owning a mile square of good land in the glorious Rimrock country. But Sheriff Durand changed his mind about Roaring Sam.

"Howdy, Sam!" he greeted the old murdering scoundrel one day. "Come up to the office, will you?"

"Sure!" Roaring Sam replied. "Glad to do it! I'm always glad to do exactly what the authorities, even a constable or assistant town marshal, wants and as for a sheriff, I don't ask anything—"

"That's all right, Sam," Durand interrupted. "I understand perfectly. Come on up!"

Roaring Sam squinted, and followed in silence. In the sheriff's private office Sheriff Durand brought forward a wheat bag and opened it. He dragged out two long-barreled and two short-barreled revolvers, two large-caliber and two small-caliber automatics, with clips and ammunition for all. Roaring Sam looked suspiciously, though longingly, at the array of weapons. The truth is, he loved his guns.

"Here's a badge, Sam," Durand said, "I hereby appoint you deputy sheriff. Will you accept the job?"

"What—what?" Roaring Sam gasped, staring with unbelieving eyes at the silver badge extended toward him.

"You understand, Sam; I can call on you for assistance, and you have to render it—in an emergency. This isn't an emergency, exactly. I'm just asking you as a favor to law and order—to me, too, personally, in a way—to be a deputy sheriff. Will you?"

Roaring Sam hecked in his throat. He bit his lip nervously, and spat awkwardly and with uncommon inaccuracy. His eyes

blinked and he glanced wildly about, as if he were trapped in the office, or in some danger which he could not understand.

"You—you mean it?" Roaring Sam asked breathlessly.

"Sure!"

"And if— And if somebody or other resists arrest—I—I kin get 'im?"

"Exactly!"

"An' it'll be a legal, legitimate, honest-to— honorable and genuine killing, if I—if I should kill?"

"No doubt. Of course; there must be resistance. If not, you hang."

"Sure—course—I know that! But—but, say, sheriff, I always thought you all had it in for me?"

"Oh, that's right, too—I always did have!"

"Sheriff—I ain't no idea what changed your heart, but—but I'll say this: I never took no worse dose of medicine, legal an' unqualified, than when I s'rendered these here guns. Them long ones—them short ones—I never expected I'd have any better friend than them. But you——"

"That's all right."

"I know! But, sheriff, what'll your friends say?"

"They'll give me ——, Sam!"

"I know hit! If any friend of yours, that used to was, opens his blamed haid to me——"

"No, you can't do that! You can't do that! You kill any friend of mine, what I have now, but which I lose account of appointing you—well, that's one murder you don't get away from, understand?"

"Well, mebbby I cain't, sheriff. I ain't promising I won't, though."

Sheriff Durand wet his lips. Roaring Sam had noted an unforeseen contingency. It forced his hand.

"You remember they robbed the bank?"

"Yes, I remember," Roaring Sam snarled.

"An' you inquired around where was I, at the time, too! I hearn about it. That made me mad."

"I don't blame you, Sam; it was my mistake; I want you to find that robber. He didn't leave the country. Riding around, I came across a horse. He had buffalo berries in his mane and tail, just some of the seed. That's all I know. He was one of your horses."

"What! You say——"

"No, but I traced that out. Somebody

rode one of your horses, but stained it with berry juice, plenty. And he left that horse at the lower end of your pasture."

"Down theer, eh? Huh! All right, sheriff! See my dust, how she rolls!"



SHERIFF DURAND leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigar. For a long time, he counted his fingers. When he went down into the Court House Square, the first man he met was President Thomas Thurmen of the bank.

"Look here, sheriff! I've always been your friend, haven't I?"

"Unquestionably, one of the friendships I've been happiest in and proudest of!" the sheriff replied heartily.

"Well, you've something to explain. Roaring Sam just went down the street wearing a deputy sheriff's badge. How about it?"

"That's official business, Mr. Thurmen."

"What! You won't tell me!"

"There are some things a man can't tell—perhaps for shame—perhaps for duty."

"You sent that man out? Why, he'll do legal murder again! The same as he always has. He's a crazy killer, but sly! He's paved the way for every killing he ever did, from his first—self-defense and now—an officer of the law! Why, if he catches somebody shooting a prairie chicken out of season, he'll kill—call it resisting arrest!"

"I shouldn't be surprized," Durand admitted.

"And you made that kind a deputy sheriff! By the gads, we'll— You're crazy, yourself! We'll see what a referendum'll do!"

Sheriff Durand walked away. He was flushed, unhappy, morose—and silent. The county court seat knew what he had done. Roaring Sam had bragged it, while he rode away. He had flourished his guns—proud of being "legalized again," as he called it.

His dust was out at the brim of the Bad Land, and he was headed for his home ranch, with such emotions as a killer, legalized to do his worst, must endure, or enjoy.

Roaring Sam rolled up to his ranch cabin, a great, scraggling structure of cottonwood logs, with tiny windows, many wings and some of the roof covered with poles and dirt, some with warped boards, some with roofing felt—a corral and outlying shacks completing the place, which was sheltered amid a heavy brake of cottonwood trees and saplings.

He saddled a lank, powerful brute of a yellow horse, with a long thin tail and mane. He bridled the brute with a heartless hammering on the teeth of a big chain bit.

"By gad!" he cried. "Now I'm ridin' free an' equal!"

He galloped away down the trail into the Bad Lands, toward his lower pasture. Of evidence he needed none at all. He had his suspicions, which was enough. The day was nearing the end when he left his ranch; night was at hand, when in the late twilight, he rounded Whistling Butte and headed up Lost Spring Brook, to where Willie Cuttyank had squatted a cabin down on the heart of the Roaring Sam pasture.

"Doggone!" Roaring Sam grinned. "Ain't this what I wanted, now? An' me a deputy sheriff? Hub!"

He galloped up the packed clay earth, the thunder of his horse's hoofs echoing in the gloom. He had a criminal's knowledge of the law. If a man resists arrest. kill him! He asked no more. He was going to interview Willie Cuttyank. There'd be no witnesses!

He slammed up to the homesteader's cabin, which had been built of chunks of stone, clay, poles and other Bad Land debris. He rushed up to the door, threw himself against it and tore the slabs and jambs from their fastenings. Within he confronted not one crippled little man, but three stalwarts, who began to shoot as he burst in.

"Resistance!" he gasped as he laughed and began himself to shoot.

The echoes of his firing with his long guns, which he had drawn as he flung himself from the horse reverberated through the Bad Lands. The shots were heard at his own ranch, and two of his cowboys came riding down, knowing how impetuous their employer was on occasion.

They found him lying half in and half out of the cabin door, his body sprawled on the door, which was laid flat on the ground, with the side posts and all. He was dead. Within were three others, who were dead, too—all shot down where they stood, and all with weapons more or less emptied in that terrific battle.

The cowboys, having seen this much by the light of matches struck in the night, rode hastily by a cross cut past the Five-Way Forks of Rippling Creek and into Flapjack, the county court.

"Sheriff!" "Riding Poem" Coleman exclaimed, "Roarin' Sam's killed up!"

"Is he?" Durand inquired mildly. "How did it happen?"

They couldn't tell him much. They said the three who did it, however, were also dead.

"Yes?" Durand inquired. "Well, we'll get the coroner, summons the jury, call out the undertaker— Excuse me a minute!"

They rolled over the rough highway to Willie Cuttyank's homestead. One of the coroner's jury summoned around town was Bank President Thomas Thurmen. He protested that he didn't want to go. The sheriff was obdurate and in spite of the great man's indignation said he could go out or go to jail till the county judge should sit on this case of a man refusing to do his jury duty. Thurmen rode out.

After midnight, by lantern lights and flashes, and the glare of automobile headlights, the scene was inspected. Sheriff Durand poked around till he found a wheat sack. He removed from the waists of the three men, Cuttyank and his two companions, great wads of currency and bricks of bonds. He dropped them into the bag. He found, also, the several weapons with which the bank had failed to defend itself. Thurmen ceased his grumbling, and stared with enthusiasm at the revelations.

"I happen to notice these two strangers were friendly with Willie," Durand swore on the stand, "I learned, back East, that Willie wasn't a cripple, but wore a strap and harness over his shoulder to bring it down like a feeble man's. That, and some other details, persuaded me that —um—m —an eager, not to say reckless deputy sheriff, at the right time, might perform a distinct service to the community—against those bad city gunmen who robbed our bank."

No one said anything. The case was all carried forth, according to law. Roaring Sam Kimme was buried by the county, and a large number of his fellow citizens marched to honor him. The boys chipped in and bought him a monument, worthy of a brave and useful officer of the law.

Now and then, after the ceremony, and even before it, friends of Sheriff George Durand strolled up to him, extended a hand and said, "Shake!" and then strolled on again. Durand made no comment to any one.

He just sat in his office, counting his fingers. By and by he admitted to himself—

"Well, that double job's done!"



**I**T IS a rainy night, and still. The mocking-birds sleep, puffed up amongst the cottonwood leaves. The eaves are dripping. There is no sound save the sound of rain, and the night is dark. Above the town a flare of light illumines the low-hung sky.

In the countryside about town, farmers pass to and fro amongst their cows, pail in hand. There are scents of hay in misty lantern-lighted barns where new milk gives off its clouds of scenty steam to mingle with the breath scents of the quiet cows that give it.

But I am far away.

I hear rain drip: but not from cottonwood or eave. I scent quite different scents to those of hay, and newly given milk from meek-eyed cattle. No farmer treads where my thoughts are tonight. No song-bird sits puff-feathered in the rain.

I sit on an old teakwood sea-chest in a small room; about me seven others like myself. The air is thick with tobacco smoke. Outside the rain drips from spar and shroud and backstay, from drooping canvas hidden in the sea-glooms overhead.

"Bill, what brought you to sea?" asks a shipmate.

"What brought any of us?" asks another.

I hear the voices of men I used to know—mates and second mates, bosuns, and ship's carpenters, a.b.'s and boys. I hear songs and music, oaths now and again, and often strange knowing laughter of old men. Men walk bare-footed in a great sea-darkness to trim the becalmed sails at the order of officers.

Lanterns hang in the mizzen rigging, while boats go out to the utter darks of midnight, hard winds blowing upon the unseen sea.

I leap again from my bunk to race half-naked to the restless deck, my shipmates racing beside me—

"Man overboard!"

It is another day, and the sea, unutterably blue, peaceful, is yet mysterious as upon those dark nights. I sit on the end of the long boom, one of my shipmates with me, and fish for bonito. It is our first voyage and we are approaching the line.

"What did ye come to sea for, young fellers?" asks an old sailor from the forecastle, who has come to the boom to gather in his tattered, wind-dried clothing.

He sees contentment in our faces and he smiles; saying, gruff-voiced, as he takes the clothing under his arm—

"Wait till ye see the Horn."

After he is gone we are silent, wondering what this much spoken of Horn can be like.

I sit here tonight surrounded by flowers asleep in April's gentle rain.

Soon I shall roll in; flower, bird, hurricane and topsail yard, each forgotten.

What is the strange kinship that exists between all beautiful things? In flower of the garden, as on white crested rollers on an angry sea?

I wish that I were a boy again; in body, as in spirit which I am. I would go down to the docks, and walk aboard and meet the smiling mariners who were so much amused at me and at my fellow adventurers. I'd hear the voices of the mates again, and the cold sea-drip, and feel the mocking winds. I'd like to live it all over, bitter and sweet together.

Tonight at sunset the world was wonderful. The sky pale yellow, heavy with tumbled clouds above the sinking sun. Mystery and magic were all around me. Tree and leaf were still, song-birds silent.

I wonder if, when the ship sails again—

I wonder if, after the thing men have named Death, which many fear, which is to me as the sailing of an outbound ship, old shipmates whom I knew upon an earlier day will smiling ask again—

"Bill—what brought you here?"

It, this whole existence of ours, is an adventure, isn't it?

I am glad that I am privileged to go upon my questing.

Songs, tears, music, sorrow, pain and wonder—what little things they seem when looked back upon?

It is today that counts!

How good today is, isn't it?

One would wish to be a worthy man, a shipmate approved of his fellows—to make, to have, to keep life as a bright thing to be enjoyed to the utmost.

# OM *A Six-Part Story ~ Part V* by Talbot Mundy



*Author of "Mohamed's Tooth," "The Nine Unknown," etc.*

***The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.***

WHEN Cottswold Ommony, forester in the Civil Service of India, drifted into the die-hard club at Delhi the members straightway began to gossip about him. They recalled that Jack Terry, the M. D., married Ommony's younger sister Elsa twenty years before; that an American pork packer named Marmaduke persuaded Terry to become medico at the Buddhist mission which Marmaduke had established at Tilgaun; that Ommony was co-trustee with a red-headed American spinster named Hannah Sanburn, who was head of the mission; and with a Tibetan Ringding Gelong Lama whom Ommony had never seen; that his enemy, Jenkins, had been appointed head of the forestry department and that Ommony had resigned.

As for Ommony, he said nothing; but pretty soon he got up and went to see his friend, John McGregor, his giant Irish wolf-hound Diana at heel. McGregor was head of the Secret Service. Their conversation developed interestingly. Jenkins had had Elsa hypnotized by the black-art swine Kananda Pal, robbed her of her mind and used her mental maladjustment as an excuse to break the engagement between them. Terry married her to save her and took her to a sacred place in the upper Abor country to have her cured. There the "Masters" live; there also is a sacred stone with magic properties. Terry and Elsa disappeared. That was twenty years ago.

McGregor also told Ommony that Miss Sanburn's adopted daughter had been robbed of a piece of crystal jade, the thief being murdered and the jade, as well as the adopted daughter, disappearing. Tin Lal, a Secret Service operative, recovered the jade and tried to sell it to Chutter Chand the jeweler. Through Chutter Chand's agency McGregor recovered the jade and since then had been importuned by a mysterious somebody to give it up. He thought that the jade might have something to do with the disappearance of the Terrys.

Suddenly hopeful of rescuing his sister, Ommony determined to inspect the Buddhist mission at Tilgaun as a pretext, then slip away on the desperate chance of penetrating the perilous unexplored upper Abor country, whence no stranger had ever returned.

Before starting he took the jade to his friend Chutter Chand, the jeweler. Chutter Chand said that in his opinion the jade had been broken off from a much larger piece and sensitized in very ancient times by a prehistoric race of superscientists, with the result that the stone reflects the whole of the holder's thought and character from the very day he was born. The jeweler added that he thought the "Masters" of the upper Abor guarded the forgotten secrets of the superscientists with the idea of letting them out a little at a time as the world was prepared to receive them. He was in abject terror, for a mysterious visitor had threatened him with death if he did not return the stone.

Just then an old Tibetan lama entered with his young *chela* or disciple in quest of the jade. He didn't get it. Ommony sent his wolf-hound Diana to trail them to their quarters when they left and himself made friends with the Hillman whom they had posted to shadow him. The Hillman said that his name was Dawa Tsering and that he came from Spiti, where they practise polyandry. The old lama, he said, was Tsiang Samdup, a name which startled Ommony. The disciple was Samding; "some call him San-fun-ho." Then he suddenly waxed uncommunicative and disappeared.

The dog Diana returned and led Ommony to the lama's hiding-place, where Dawa Tsering tried to knife him in the dark. Diana bit the Hillman in the neck; Ommony took the knife away from him, and the Hillman cursed the lamas.

"They told me I could come to no harm if I obeyed them and said my prayers," he added.

"Their magic is useless. Give me my knife and I will go back to the Hills."

Ommony gave Dawa Tsering the address of Mrs. Cornock-Campbell, where he was to be a guest at dinner, and told the Hillman to report there between ten and eleven that night, when the knife would be returned. Then he drove to McGregor's office, wrapped up the jade, addressed the package to Miss Sanburn at Tilgaun and entrusted it to McGregor's most trusted operative, the Eurasian, Aaron Macaulay, for delivery.

When Dawa Tsering showed up for his knife he told them that the jade had been found on a man from Abor, who had come to the Tilgaun mission for medical treatment and had died there. The stone was stolen from Miss Sanburn by a mission girl, whom the Secret Service operative Tin Lal had subsequently murdered. Tsiang Samdup had promised Dawa Tsering a great reward for recovering it. During their stay in Delhi Dawa Tsering noticed that the lama was visited a good deal by "actor people."

Just then a letter was shoved under the door, and the messenger disappeared before any one could see who he was.

THE letter, which was signed by Tsiang Samdup, referred vaguely to the "Middle Way" and asked Ommony to take the jade to Tilgaun, "which is one stage of the journey to the place whence it came."

Ommony, provoked at Tsiang Samdup because the lama would not take Ommony into his confidence, determined not to play into the other's hands by preceding him to Tilgaun, but to trail him there, thus finding out what the other was up to on the road. Also Ommony made up his mind to find that "Middle Way," and find it without the aid of the Secret Service. If the latter took a hand, Ommony well knew the Way would be closed to him. He knew of course that the phrase as the lama used it might refer to its religious significance but most likely—indeed almost surely—meant an actual secret trail through India.

He bullied Dawa Tsering into leaving the lama's service and entering his own; then, accompanied by the Hillman and Diana, he departed to visit Benjamin the Jew, a merchant and money lender to whom he had once done a very great favor. Moved by gratitude, the merchant told him much. He learned first, that the lama "for certain reasons" was planning to take a troupe of actors north.

Then too he wormed it out of Benjamin that for the past fifteen years or more the merchant had been Tsiang Samdup's Delhi agent. The lama, it seems, always paid his bills in small bars of solid gold.

Finally after an enormous emotional struggle Benjamin confessed under seal of utter confidence that Tsiang Samdup's traffic with him was largely concerned with smuggling friendless little European girls—seven had been smuggled already—up into the lamaist country and with buying supplies for them. From Delhi they went up by the "Middle Way."

Ommony was shocked—disgusted—and even more determined to see this thing through. Seeing the contempt in Ommony's manner, Benjamin offered to help him into the Abor country, where Ommony could see for himself that neither Benjamin nor the lama had done anything but good for the little girls. This could easily be accomplished, because Maitraya, the leader of the lama's troupe of actors, was in Benjamin's debt. So Ommony

disguised himself as a Bhat-Brahman—a caste of Brahman so high that it was beyond the reach of caste—and as such was introduced to Maitraya, under the name of Gupta Rao. Under protest Maitraya took "Gupta Rao" into his troupe as leading actor.

This business being arranged, the two actors drove off to meet the lama and his *chela*, who were attending the birthday party of Vasantasena, a courtesan who wielded more power secretly than a dozen maharajas did openly. There Ommony was surprised to learn that indirectly the piece of jade had passed from Aaron Macaulay's hands into those of Vasantasena. What a marvelous spy system the lama controlled! he reflected.

Vasantasena held out the jade temptingly.

"Give me your *chela* in exchange," she coaxed.

"No," replied the *chela* in a voice like a golden gong.

Vasantasena's eyes flashed, and her mood changed into savagery like a stirred snake's. She flung the stone at the lama straight and hard. He secreted it in his bosom imperturbably.

"Go," she ordered hoarsely. "You—and you—and you, dogs of actors!"

Unhurriedly the four left and entered a strange carriage at the gate, with the servants of Vasantasena pursuing them. But the pursuit was not in order to do them harm, but to beseech forgiveness and to beg them to accept gifts from their mistress, that her sacrilegious action might not prove ill-omened. However, their gifts and cries were ignored, and in silence the four drove off.

THEY drove off to a Tibetan cloister and rehearsed the play, which proved somewhat akin to the European medieval morality play and apparently had been written by the lama with the idea of making the people vaguely dissatisfied with British rule. The *chela's* acting and delivery outshone that of Maitraya, who had been engaged as the star.

That evening a caravan of elephants and camels took the troupe, together with a number of unidentified women, from Delhi to a destination which the lama abstained from revealing. Ommony, Dawa Tsering and Diana were guests—or prisoners; it was hard to tell which.

When they came to a halt Ommony resolved upon a showdown. Bluntly he told Tsiang Samdup who he was and demanded that the lama talk too. For answer Tsiang Samdup led Ommony along a long screened passageway that echoed to the laughter of women and bade him look through a slit in a wooden panel down on to the floor below.

There Ommony was astonished to see a group of young women, some of them unmistakable Hindus, some Tibetan, and some, fourteen in all, which he could not place. Their faces and bearing were European, but they spoke Urdu with the other girls, and it occurred to Ommony that these must be the children Benjamin had kidnaped. Perfect poise and self-possession characterized them all. High and low caste, they talked and laughed together until the *chela* went among them, bearing in his hands the fragment of crystal jade. In turn, they gazed into it almost reverently, and then at an order from the lama, they quickly left the room. The old man refused to satisfy Ommony's curiosity as to their identity.

Finding that Diana would obey her master's signals, the lama gave her a "speaking part" in the play, and made her rehearse with the troupe a little



later in the day. When Ommony raised his finger Diana would open her mouth and the lama spoke her lines from behind a screen, where he stood to direct the actors.

The rehearsal lasted all the afternoon and on until the time for the performance to begin. Thanks to the lama's efforts and the *chela's* consummate skill as an actor the play aroused immense enthusiasm, but instead of staying to give another performance the troupe left the town at once with a speed that amounted to flight.

They halted shortly before dawn in a private park and when Ommony awoke he found that he had been left behind. Later a message was brought by a servant requesting him not to leave without orders. Then, while he waited, there came Sirdar Sirohe Singh of Tilgaun, a member of the Secret Service and, apparently, a friend of the lama's, who stayed close by, keeping watch over Ommony until night-

**H**E RETURNED along drafty corridors to the cell that was full of white mist pouring through the unglazed window, and sat down to consider whether he should keep up the Bhat-Brahman rôle or let his beard grow and resume the garb of an unimaginative Englishman.

"If I make the change now, at this juncture, the lama might suspect I know something," he muttered. "Better wait a while."

But he was not quite sure. A Bhat-Brahman has no ostensible business over the northern border, where his songs and critical jests would be more likely to get him into trouble than not.

He had not made up his mind when a rap came on the door and the lama blew in on a gust of rising wind, his long robe fluttering clear of the strong brown legs. The *chela* followed him and slammed the door, unrolled a prayer mat and presently sat down on it beside the lama. Ommony fought hard to suppress the triumph in his eyes as he stood, and then sat down on the truckle bed in obedience to the lama's gesture.

"It is cold," said the lama. "You must have a sheepskin coat, my son. We mountaineers are too prone to forget that others suffer from what we consider comfort. Samding, see that Gupta Rao is provided."

He did not glance at the *chela*. His eyes were on Ommony's, and their gaze was penetrating. There was nothing hypnotic about his stare, but the impression was that he could see things below the surface.

"And what have you learned, my son?" he asked presently.

"Very little," said Ommony. "I have

fall when the troupe reappeared. No explanation was offered for this behavior.

For two months they traveled across Northern India, never stopping in any one place more than one night, and not once was Ommony able to approach or speak with any of the mysterious girls.

At last they reached the great foothills and were received at a lamasery near Darjeling. After a short rest Ommony left the cell-like room he had been given and, at the end of a wind-swept hall, came to a gallery, overhanging a dim hall where incense-clouds floated. Here a service was in progress, and on the altar lay the fragment of crystal jade.

There, too, stood the *chela*, and as he stared down at him Ommony saw something which made him gasp.

He left the gallery and went back to his cell, more than ever anxious to reach Tilgaun.

learned that all my power of observation isn't much more than a beetle's."

"But that is a great deal to have learned," the lama answered. Then, without a pause: "And you are not yet satisfied?"

"On the contrary. I hold you to your promise to let me pursue whatever course my meditation opens up!"

"My son, I am not the appointed keeper of such permits!"

"You can make things difficult or make them easy for me. Which are you going to do?" asked Ommony; and it seemed to him that the *chela* was smiling behind that marvelously molded face.

"What is it you wish to learn most?" asked the lama; and Ommony, after one hard look at the *chela*, closed his eyes to think. It would be useless to tell anything but raw truth; he had a feeling that the lama could detect the slightest taint of falsehood; yet he was determined not to confess to what he now knew, because in all likelihood that would shut all doors against him. "A little knowledge" is usually doubly dangerous, if the other fellow knows you have it.

"I wish to demonstrate that I was really right to decide to trust you," he said at last.

"But you know that," said the lama. "Your heart tells you you were right. A man's heart does not lie to him; it is the brain that lies, imagining all kinds of vanities."

Ommony took thought again. He sensed that he was on trial, not for his life but for something more important—leave to go ahead and find out for himself the whole solution of the mystery. He had to find an answer that should not be false, that should

not betray the knowledge he already had, and that should appeal, nevertheless, to the lama's sense of fitness. Superficiality would receive a superficial answer. Deep was asking deep for a disclosure of ultimate motive.

"My job in the forest is gone. I want to find work worth doing," he said at last.

"And do you think I can show you that?" asked the lama, looking straight at him. One moment he looked very old, the next not more than middle aged. It was as if he hovered between this world and another, in which were visions that he could bring back with him to earth.

Ommony threw evasion to the winds.

"I want to learn your secret."

"Ah! But to obey? Not me, but to obey your own heart, if I help you to see what none of your race has ever yet seen?"

"I'll do what I believe is right," said Ommony, and the lama nodded, glancing sharply at Samding, as if to see whether the *chela* confirmed his opinion.

The *chela* smiled inscrutably.

"You must go to Tilgaun," said the lama, "where you might have gone in the beginning. You have saved me trouble by permitting me to study you for two months, but you have given yourself much unnecessary hardship, my son. Nevertheless, the road that lies ahead is harder; and it is not good to deprive a man of the full measure of experience. If you wish, you may follow me to Tilgaun, and await what comes of it."

He had a way of ending a discussion as abruptly as he had begun it, his mind almost visibly closing, vaguely suggestive of the way a tortoise draws in its head. One realized it would not be the slightest use to speak another word to him on the subject.

The *chela* got up and helped him to his feet, rolled up the mat and followed him out of the room almost mechanically; but turned in the doorway suddenly and looked back.

It was dark there, for the door was set in a stone arch six feet deep and there was no window at the end of the drafty corridor. But Ommony could almost have sworn the *chela* laughed silently. There was a momentary glimpse of white teeth and a feminine movement of the head that certainly suggested it.

"It beats the deuce!" he reflected. "That *chela* knows now that I know she's a girl; although I can't imagine *how* she knows it; and that means that the lama knows I

know it—for they haven't a secret apart. The strangest part is, that they don't seem to care a whoop—either of 'em!"

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TILGAUN

*If a vain man should value your virtue, beware! For he will steal it in the name of God, and he will sell your reputation in the market-place.*—From the Book of The Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.

THERE was no more rain that day, but mist that wrapped Darjiling in a dripping shroud. Beads like perspiration gathered and trickled down interior walls, and there were no fires; the monks led the austere life that includes indifference to such minor afflictions as ague; and through indifference they seemed to have become immune. But Ommony suffered.

A monk brought him a long sheepskin coat, and in that he paraded the corridors to keep his blood circulating. He begged more sheepskins and set Dawa Tsering to work making a coat for Diana, because animals used to the plains die of pneumonia in those altitudes more readily than human beings.

He racked his brains to decide whether or not to go into Darjiling and buy European clothes, while he leaned over a parapet to watch strong-legged Sikhim women looming out of the mist, loaded like camels with huge piles of cordwood for the monastery kitchen, until he became bored.

He was feverish with impatience. At noon he made up his mind to go and ask the lama's advice about disguise, supposing he could find him. But as he left the cell to hunt for the lama a monk came with the midday meal and stood by to watch him eat—a cheery old monk, who laughed when questioned, and talked about everything under the sun except what Ommony wanted to know, spinning his prayer wheel furiously as if to immunize himself against heretical contagion.

And when the monk had shuffled away with the empty platters and Ommony set forth again to hunt for the lama, Maitraya met him midway along the first corridor—Maitraya smothered in a sheepskin coat like Ommony's and blowing great clouds of breath in front of him.

"I am paid, O Gupta Rao! I have a draft on Benjamin and money for the railway

fares to Delhi—enough for first class fares for all of us and liberal provision for the way. Would that there were more men like Tsiang Samdup! May the generous gods bless him!

"No argument, Gupta Rao; no deductions; no delay; a bag of money, an order on Benjamin, and such courteously worded thanks as Vishnu never received from a mother just delivered of a son! I feel as if my whole body had been drenched in thanks from inside outward! Are you on your way to your cell?"

"I am on my way to find the lama. Where is he?"

"Gone! Didn't you know that? He left an hour ago, he and all the women and Samding on little Tibetan ponies. There was no ceremony. They rode away like ghosts into the mist."

Maitraya took Ommony's arm in rank defiance of caste decorum.

"Come along, Gupta Rao, I know you are no Brahman. You are possibly a Kshatriya like me, but what the — has caste to do with our profession! Whatever you are, you have the approval of me, Maitraya! You are a great actor. You are a man after mine own heart—a little conceited possibly—a trifle grumpy on occasion—but we all have faults. I know a first rate actor, when I see him! I forgive the little insignificancies. I respect the strength of character—the genius! Come, let us go to your cell; I have a proposal for you."

Ommony led him to the cell and sat down on the truckle bed. Maitraya would not sit; he threw an attitude and paced the floor, striving to create an atmosphere of tremendous drama, that somehow refused to materialize between those dripping walls. He shuddered at the cold when he should have gestured like a Mogul chieftain, and coughed, which rather spoiled the grandeur of his voice.

"Gupta Rao—let us accept our destiny! If two men, mutually worthy of respect, were ever brought together for immortal purposes, those two are we! Consider! Have we not a task in common? Have we not a great ideal to espouse together? Is it not our duty to inspire the stage of Hind? \* Have we not a ripe field waiting for us? Should we not revisit all the scenes of our success and stage such plays as shall uplift the drama of this land of Hind forever? Think of those audiences, Gupta

Rao! Think of the profits! Charge no more than one-half rupee admission, and we make our fortunes!"

Ommony cast about for an excuse for refusing, that should not turn a friend into an enemy.

"Who do you propose should write the plays?" he asked.

"We *have* a play! 'Ye Rulers of the Upper Spheres'—a play, I tell you! I have memorized the whole of it! Let the Jew finance us, Gupta Rao! Let us go to Benjamin and use our joint persuasion to wheedle a decent contract out of him. I offer you a one-third interest!

"Commercialism—pah! The Jew is a commercialist, so we must feed him with rupees. The lama, on the other hand, is ignorant of money's value; he fails to see that it is good for the audience to pay a fair price for its education. As for us, let us take the middle way between two crass extremes. And if in the process we make a fortune, that will be no more than what is due to us. Have you heard that Christian adage, that the laborer is worthy of his hire?"

"I seem to have heard another one about stealing," said Ommony drily. "The play is the lama's."

"Bah! It isn't copyright. He should have taken elementary precautions. Besides, he has no right to keep for his own use an idea that has universal application. The play is religious; who can copyright religion?"

"Did you think of obtaining the lama's permission?" asked Ommony.

"No, I confess, I never thought of that. But it's too late now; he's gone. Let us go to Benjamin. The Jew will see the point of not letting a good profitable play lie idle for the sake of a bit of squeamishness. Come along. Let Benjamin convince you."

Ommony jumped at that solution. He knew Benjamin.

"All right," he said. "You make the proposal to him. If Benjamin agrees, I will then consider it. And don't forget, you'll need a genius to act the part of San-fun-ho!"

"Aha!" exclaimed Maitraya. "Genius? I can act that part much better than the *chela* did! Not that he was bad, mind you—not that he was bad. I will play San-fun-ho, and you the king. Together we will create dramatic history!"

\* India.



"First create confidence in Benjamin! I'll answer yes or no when you have persuaded *him*," said Ommony.

He got rid of Maitraya with difficulty. No argument availed until it dawned on Maitraya that he could pocket the cost of transportation by leaving Ommony behind; then he permitted himself to be led along the corridor and lost in the maze of passages and stairways.

Ommony went in search of the abbot, and found a monk at last who did not shake his head and grin when spoken to, but led up an outside stairway to a grimly austere cell just under the roof, where the abbot sat cross-legged on a stone platform at one end, meditating. He opened his eyes and gazed at Ommony for several minutes before a smile at last spread over his Mongolian face and he passed one lean hand down the length of his scrawny gray beard. He appeared to be fairly well pleased with the result of his inspection.

"The spirit of restlessness is difficult to overcome," he said at last. "It is sometimes wise to yield to it. There are many lives. Not all knowledge can be acquired at once. In what way can I help, my son?"

Ommony thought of asking him about the lama, but discerned that the gentle courtesy concealed an iron aptitude for silence. He had never in his life gained anything by questioning men about what they did not wish to tell. Misinformation is worse than ignorance. But there was one point on which he felt entitled to be curious.

"I beg forgiveness for intrusion. I return thanks for food and lodging. Did the holy lama Tsiang Samdup make a statement of his wishes with regard to me?"

The abbot's face became wreathed in smiles again. He nodded.

"Where do you wish to go, my son? To Tilgaun? When?"

"Now!"

The abbot struck a gong that hung on the wall beside him; before its overtones had died a young monk appeared in the doorway and received swiftly spoken, singsong orders in a language Ommony did not understand.

The monk gave guttural assent, and waited in the door for Ommony to go with him, but there were two or three minutes' delay while the abbot amused himself by playing with Diana almost childishly, laughing at her new sheepskin coat and using his

staff to measure her height at the shoulder and her length from the tip of her nose to the end of her tail. Ommony made Diana sit up and salute him, whereat he blessed the dog solemnly. Finally he gave seven turns to a prayer wheel fixed in an iron bracket within comfortable reach, nodded to the monk, and smiled farewell at Ommony, dismissing him with a blessing that sounded like the first bars of an anthem to eternal peace.

Followed laughter, bustling, friendliness, and no delay. They sped the departing guest. A dozen monks made themselves agreeable; two of them carried out Ommony's trunk into the courtyard; some led out little sturdy Tibetan ponies and held them while others lashed the loads in place with the unhurried speed of old campaigners. There was ample supply of provisions, including grain for the ponies; and when Ommony suggested paying for it all they laughed. They seemed amused at the idea that any guest of theirs should pay for anything.

However, he noticed that two sturdy looking Tibetans, who were certainly not monks, had been told off to accompany him; they were listening to instructions from the young monk who had received the abbot's incomprehensible orders; standing at a little distance apart, they kept glancing at him, nodding as the instructions were repeated again and again.

There were, in all, eight ponies and the party was on the way, filing through the wide gate with one Tibetan leading and the other Tibetan bringing up the rear, within thirty minutes. Dawa Tsering burst into song as he rode under the arch behind Ommony and they were all swallowed in a drifting bank of cloud, that even hid the monastery wall as they turned sharp to the right and followed the track that ran beside it. The sturdy little ponies put their best foot forward as they always do when they are headed northward.

The ninety miles to Tilgaun meant four days of strenuous going, for the miles are reckoned as the crow flies, whereas men and their mounts must climb and descend over the shoulders of hills heaped on one another by the gods to keep away intruders.

The trail wound down through phantom deodars and dipped into a fleecy white fog that condensed in dew on everything warm that it touched, descending seven thousand

feet into the Rengeet Valley before they crossed a long bridge and commenced to climb again.

Most of the time it was like sitting on an earthquake; there was nothing to do but cling tightly and watch the pony's ears in the mist as the nimble legs slid, struggled and recovered. There was no chance for anything but single file among the rocks and rhododendrons; even Diana had to trot behind the pony to escape being trodden on. It was not the surfaced high-road they were taking, but presumably a short cut, which the Tibetan guide appeared to know as intimately as a mole knows tunnels.

They climbed nine thousand feet and slept in a windy hut above the clouds, where the Tibetans cooked greasy supper and sang plaintive songs in which Dawa Tsering joined. There was no sign of the lama's party, nor any answer to Ommony's questions as to how far ahead the lama might be; nor was there any indication that the lama's party had crossed that pass ahead of them. But at dawn, when Ommony wanted to make an early start the Tibetans had scores of excuses that ended with blunt refusal. They were not impudent or surly; they smiled as cheerfully as Chinese statues, and simply did not load the ponies.

"If I slew them as they deserve, there would be none to do the work," said Dawa Tsering. "Why not offer them money, thou? Never fear—I will win it back from them at dice!"



OMMONY offered money, but the Tibetans only showed their teeth in wider grins than ever. There was nothing to do but wait until they were pleased to move, and they did not do that until the sun was over the highest ridges by a full hour and a wind had blown new banks of mist into the ravines. Then suddenly, as if they had received a message through the ether, they began to pack the ponies and were off in no time without a word of explanation.

The hills lay in parallel waves that must be crossed diagonally, as a boat offers its shoulder to a rising sea. To the northward the huge range of the Himalayas made itself felt but was invisible; there was a sense of impending immensity, increased by the curtain of cloud that drifted between earth and heaven.

Wherever passes gaped between the shoul-

ders of the mountains, dense white clouds flowed down along them, looking like incredibly swift glaciers. Half of the time the rump of the pony ahead was just discernible through the mist, but once in a while some trick of wind would reveal enormous vistas that a man could hardly contemplate and keep his balance.

But the ponies were content to climb hour after interminable hour, and Dawa Tsering sang about the wind-swept hills of Spiti as they rose and descended through every imaginable plane of vegetation, from steamy bottoms where dense jungle stifled them, up through bamboo and rhododendron to where oaks and maples flourished—up beyond those to the fir-line—up again until the firs gave out and raw wind rolled the clouds around them straight from Kanchenjunga—then down again into the suffocating tropics, where woodticks fell on them and a man's hands were kept constantly busy picking leeches off the ponies and Diana had to be gone over carefully three times within the hour.

They crossed rock-cluttered torrents over bamboo bridges that swayed and danced under the weight of one pony at a time, and bivouacked again at midnight in the clouds, where icy wind shrieked through the chinks of a deserted herdsman's hut; then descended two hours after dawn into a steaming caldron where black water quarreled on its way through aromatic jungle.

Never a sign of the lama's party, although they passed stone *chortens*\* every mile or so, and cairns built by pilgrims, to which every passer-by had stuck little prayer-flags to flutter the eternal formula *Om mani padme hum*. There were messages on bits of paper from one pilgrim to another, weighted down with stones near some of the *chortens* but none that the lama had left.

And there were unaccountable delays. At times the two Tibetans seemed to think they had come too fast and, after a whispered consultation, unloaded the ponies whether they appeared to need a rest or not. The ponies rolled on sky-hung moss banks within a dozen feet of the edge of an abyss, and the Tibetans chewed oily seeds by the handful, offering Ommony some and pointing out good places to sit down when he showed impatience.

Dawa Tsering flicked the edge of his knife

\* Vase-shaped stone monuments, of Buddhist origin.

with a suggestive thumbnail, but they laughed at that, too, showing him a tough tree, dwarfed by the wind, that he could cut down if he needed exercise. In their own good time they started off again without excuse or argument, usually singing hymns to pacify the spirits of the mountains.

As he drew near Tilgaun Ommony's thought dwelt more on Hannah Sanburn than on the lama and Samding. Aware now that for twenty years she had kept a secret from him in spite of mutual respect and confidence that in every other way he could think of had been almost absolute, he wondered how to tackle her about it. He did not care to know even a part of her secret without letting her know that he knew it.

There had been times when he had seriously thought of asking Hannah Sanburn to become his wife; other times, when he thought that he could hardly live at the mission without marrying her had been all that kept him from resigning his forestry job and spending the remainder of his life in active duty as a trustee at Tilgaun.

He was too confirmed a bachelor not to flinch from matrimony when he reasoned out all the pros and cons, but in the back of his head there was a conviction that Hannah Sanburn would not refuse, if he should ask her.

He knew he might have done worse things than marry her. She was a splendid woman, a bit rigid as to her opinions, but as high principled and brave as she was kindly and intelligent. Moreover, she was good looking, which was no offense. But he also had known, any time these past ten years, that he never would ask her to marry him unless—he wondered what the reservation was; he had never quite defined it.

Hunted through his mind and pinned at last into a corner, up there thirteen thousand feet above sea-level with a view of Kanchenjunga to adjust mere human problems to their right proportion, he realized that he would marry Hannah Sanburn—gladly enough—at any time—if by doing so he could solve a difficulty from which she could not otherwise escape.

And now, at last, he recognized a fact. For twenty years, or almost as long as that, he had been vaguely aware of some difficulty in the background—an atmosphere—a mystery, that he had not exactly overlooked but that he had rather avoided as being presumably her private business.

True, she had always consulted him about most of her private business—for instance, her investments, which were not inconsiderable, but he had never construed that into permission to inquire about anything she did not care to tell.

Now at last he began to suspect—he was almost convinced—that there was a page in Hannah Sanburn's life which needed very careful protection; something which called for limitless generosity. He had no use for generosity that hedged itself within conventional limits.

He liked his freedom and the habit of consulting no one's inclinations but his own in private matters, which becomes almost second nature in an independent man of forty-five; but he knew he could forego all that and be a reasonably companionable married man, if his interpretation of the law of friendship should impose that course on him. To Cottswold Ommony friendship was the highest law; no conceivable claims could outweigh it; Hannah Sanburn was his friend; there was nothing to argue about.

But he hoped—without much confidence, but he hoped—that she was not in the predicament he guessed her to be in; suspecting that, since she had kept him in the dark for twenty years, she could quite easily have fooled Mrs. Cornock-Campbell, who notoriously believed the best of every one.

He rather dreaded meeting her—very much dreaded the inevitable interview; and although he fretted to overtake the lama he was much more patient with delay than he might otherwise have been, leaving untried a good many methods with which he might have persuaded the Tibetans to hurry. He salved his conscience by grumbling, aloud to them and *sotto voce* to Dawa Tsering, but there was not much energy in his complaints.

At last, toward the end of the fourth day out, they topped a fifteen-thousand-foot rise and looked over a sheer ravine, where eagles perched, toward Tilgaun that nestled in a valley with a lamaist monastery perched on a crag three thousand feet above it.

The mission buildings glowed warm in the westering sun—one instance where a rich man's money had been spent on art as well as altruism, with good manners and respect for other men's historical associations, such as missionaries commonly dispense with.

The graceful contour of the buildings and



the color of the carved stone matched the panorama. There was no assertiveness, no challenge. The Tibetan roof-lines paid acknowledgment to older art on crag and cliff around them. Without beauty there is no beatitude.

Old Marmaduke, who tortured thirty million dollars from protesting pigs, had somehow learned that; so the mission buildings were a monument to beauty, not to his ambition or his zeal.

Ommony was thrilled by the sight, as always on his rare visits. All the way down the winding track, that looked so short and actually was a half-day's journey, he recalled the days when Marmaduke had hurled Chicago business methods into battle with obstruction, subtly raised against him by foes that were easy enough to identify but undiscoverable when it came to issues. Rajas, all the missionaries, all the Indian priesthood, politicians and the press had joined in opposing the project, occasionally praising, always preventing.

Even the banks, that levied toll on Marmaduke's long purse, had invented difficulties. There were strikes of labor gangs—imported in the teeth of government obstruction—because money for the payroll did not arrive punctually.

There had been personal attacks on Marmaduke—three bullets, and a dose of ground glass in his food, in addition to assaults on his reputation. Missionaries had declared—and perhaps believed—that he was a satyr who sought to corrupt young innocents. Consignments of supplies, machinery and what not else had failed to reach the destination, or had arrived so smashed as to be useless.

Marmaduke had grinned, continued grinning, and had won, dying with his boots on, six months after Hannah Sanburn was installed in charge, hoping, as they laid him on a stretcher, that the pigs he had slain for sausage-meat might have most of the credit, since it was they who had made the mission possible.

His will, in which he appointed a Tibetan lama chief trustee, had been a nine days' wonder, partly because of its novelty, but mostly because that masterly provision introduced an international element, which made it next to impossible for politicians to undo the work.

Tibet as a military power can not be taken seriously; but it is noteworthy that

not even "big business" has succeeded in controlling its government or in penetrating its frontiers. The backing of the Dalai Lama, is worth more, in some contingencies, than a billion dollars and a million armed men—there is a European parallel.

And the Tashi Lama is to the Dalai Lama as is the differential calculus to the simple rule of three, only if anything rather more so.

## CHAPTER XXIV

HANNAH SANBURN

*My son, the wise are few; for Wisdom very seldom pleases, so that they are few who seek her. Wisdom will compel whoever entertains her to avoid all selfishness and to escape from praise. Wisdom seeks them who are worthy, discovering some here and there, unstupified and uncorrupted by the slime of cant, with whom thereafter it is a privilege to other men to tread the self-same earth, whether or not they know it.—From the Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.*

THERE is a narrow bridge, swung high above a noisy stream, that forms the only practicable gate to Tilgaun. On the Tilgaun side is a high mound that resembles a lookout post, with a big prayer flag on top that might be the defiant emblem of an army. The track leads below that mound, across a hollow, and climbs again toward the mission, more than a mile away.

As Ommony rode across the bridge behind the leading Tibetan he was aware of faces peering from the top of the mound beside the prayer flag. When he was midway over the bridge the faces disappeared. When he reached the foot of the mound there were six Bhutani mission girls standing in a row on the rim of the hollow.

They wore the Marmaduke Mission costume, which is made from one piece of daffodil yellow fabric woven on the mission looms. Their hair was decked with flowers, and they were laughing, that being a part of old Marmaduke's legacy, he having had a notion that to laugh with good reason is two-thirds of an education. The other third is harder to acquire, but comes much easier because of laughter; or so said Marmaduke, who had considered many pigs, that perished.

They were not as poised and self-reliant as the lama's dancing girls, but they looked marvelously better than the common run of Hillwomen, and as different from ordinary mission converts as a live trout is from a dead sardine.

At a glance it was obvious that nobody had told them they were heathen in their blindness; somebody had shown them how to revel in the sunshine and to wonder at the wine-light of gloaming.

It was conceivable that they had studied nature's mirth instead of watching frogs dissected with a scalpel, and had learned to be amused with each existing minute rather than to meditate on metaphysical conundrums.

But they had their heritage, nevertheless. Their eyes were on Dawa Tsering. It was just as well that there were six of them together.

Dawa Tsering, gasconading on pony-back with his feet within nine inches of the ground, called two of them by name, enquired about a third who was not there, and asked whether they had forgotten him.

"I know a good way to remind you who I am!" he boasted, and got off the pony to act the satyr among wood-nymphs. Ommony checked him curtly. He protested:

"I tell you, Ommonee, the gods make free with women and the devils do the same! It is ridiculous to pretend we are better than gods and devils. What are women for, do you suppose?"

It was so that they discovered who Ommony was. In that Bhat-Brahman costume covered by a sheepskin overcoat and without his beard they had not recognized him. All six looked at him sharply, hesitated, glanced at the sky, accepted that as an excuse, and ran, gathering up the yellow robes and showing copper-colored legs, their long hair streaming in the wind behind them.

"Why are they afraid of you?" asked Dawa Tsering. "Are you such a terror among women as all that?"

"It was the rain," said Ommony. But he knew better. The girls were giggling.

The sky had clouded over suddenly, and in a moment, on a blast of icy wind, the rain came down in sheets that cut off the view of the mission buildings. The ponies turned their rumps to it and stood, heads down, tails blown tight under. Diana whimpered and took refuge under the end of the bridge, where Ommony joined her; there was no hope of getting the ponies to move until the storm passed. It turned to hail and swept the bridge like concentrated musketry, lightning and terrific, volleying thunderclaps heightening the illusion.

Twenty minutes later, when the sky cleared as suddenly as it had clouded and the sun shone dazzlingly on drifts of melting hail, Ommony saw the drenched girls leave the shelter of a rock and scamper for the mission gate. He did not doubt for one fraction of a moment that they had been sent by Hannah Sanburn to the bridge-end to keep a lookout for him. Discontented—it was aggravating to be treated as a potential enemy—he rode on prepared to see the lama hurrying away ahead of him.

However, Hannah Sanburn met him in the gate and laughed at his disguise. He judged she was relieved, not annoyed to see him. There was all the old friendliness expressed on her New England face.

Boston, Massachusetts—Commonwealth Avenue or Tremont Street—stood out all over her, even after twenty years of Tilgaun. She was dressed in tailored serge with a camel-hair overcoat turned up to her ears. A wealth of chestnut hair beginning to turn gray showed under a plain deer-stalker hat.

She had not lost one trace of her New England manner—not a vestige of her pride. No weakness, but a firm and comprehending kindness dwelt on the almost manly forehead, at the corners of her mouth and in the grand gray eyes.

"All alone?" asked Ommony, dismounting, shaking hands.

He liked her laughter; it was wholesome, even if she did look quizzically at his jaw and chin that she had never seen before without the modifying beard.

"Yes, Cottswoold. You're a day late. Tsiang Samdup left this morning."

"Why?" he asked bluntly.

She did not answer but looked straight at Dawa Tsering, nodded, smiled at his sheepish grin, and walked straight up to him.

"Give me your knife," she said quietly, and took it from him almost before he guessed what she intended. He made no effort to prevent, but sat still on his pony, looking foolish. "You shall have that back if you behave yourself, not otherwise. If you look twice at one of the mission girls I will order the blacksmith to break your knife in two. You understand me?"

She made friends with Diana next, saying hardly a word but lifting her by the forelegs to see whether the feet were injured by the long march. The hound accepted her

authority as promptly as Dawa Tsering did.

Stroking Diana's head with one shapely, rather freckled hand, ordering the Tibetans to lead the ponies to the stable, she led the way into the stone-paved courtyard. Cloistered buildings of warm gray stone formed three sides of it, and in the midst there was an oval mass of flowers, damaged by the hail but gorgeous in the last rays of the setting sun.

There was a room reserved for Ommony's exclusive use, in a corner facing that front courtyard, and though he had never used it oftener than once in three years it had always been kept ready for him. Another room, used less seldom, was reserved for Tsiang Samdup in the corner opposite.

"Mr. McGregor sent your clothes by messenger. You'll find them all unpacked and cared for—lots of hot water—I'm sorry you can't grow a beard in fifteen minutes! Come to my room when you're ready. I'll take the dog away and feed her. That sheepskin jacket she has on is dripping wet; I'll take it off and dry her thoroughly. Will she accept food from me?"

Ommony gave Diana the required permission, and shut himself into the room to smoke and think. Hannah Sanburn had managed to make him feel that he was the one in a predicament, whose actions called for explanation. He wondered how she had contrived it. She had said nothing, done nothing out of the ordinary. Her smile had been frank and as friendly as ever. There was no air of mystery, and yet the mystery was growing more intense.

"A man who would dare to marry must be either a fool or a diviner of riddles!" he muttered, scraping at the charred bowl of a pipe that was just where he had left it seven years ago.

He let an hour slip by before he presented himself in Hannah Sanburn's private room—a long room over an archway leading to an inner cloister, bow-windowed on both sides, paneled in teak, with a blazing fire at one end. The crimson curtains had been drawn; the shaded oil lamps cast a warm glow over everything; a square table had been spread near the fire and Hannah Sanburn was making toast, stepping back and forward cautiously across Diana, who had made herself thoroughly at home on the hearthrug.

Old Marmaduke's portrait, life-size, head and shoulders, smiled on the scene from the end wall, the flickering firelight making his

shrewd, peculiarly boyish features seem almost ready to step out of the frame and talk.

It was harder than ever to put her to the question in that atmosphere. She had changed into a semi-evening dress, that aged her a little but added an old-worldly charm. It would be hard to imagine a hostess whom one would less like to offend, and the arrival of bacon and eggs on a silver tray carried by a seventeen-year-old Bhutani girl provided welcome excuse for delay.

Hannah Sanburn seemed entirely unembarrassed, and if she noticed Ommony's air of having something on his mind, she concealed the fact perfectly, talking about the daily events of the mission in a matter-of-fact voice, relating difficulties she had overcome, outlining plans for the future, avoiding anything that might lead to personal issues.

"I don't know how much good we're doing—sometimes I think hardly any," she said at last. "We raise and educate these girls. The best ones, of course, stay on for a while as teachers. But they all get married sooner or later and lapse into the old ways. It will be a century at least before this school begins to make much visible impression."

Ommony stared at the fire. "Thank goodness, we'll be dead then, with something different to fret about," he grumbled, angry with destiny that, he felt, compelled him to probe a gentlewoman's secrets. She noticed the tone of his voice—could not very well ignore it.

"What is troubling you, Cottswold? I supposed you were the most contented man on earth. Have you lost interest in your forest?"

"I've resigned from the Forestry." He stared at her, and broke ice suddenly, doing the very thing he was determined not to, blurting a blunt question without tact or even a preliminary warning. "Who is this girl Elsa, who is never at the mission when I'm here, but who has been to Lassa, talks English and Tibetan, and can draw like Michael Angelo?"

He jerked his jaw forward to conceal the contempt that he felt for himself for having blundered in so clumsily, all the while watching her face but detecting no nervousness. To his surprise and relief she laughed and leaned her head against the high chair-back, looking at him humorously from



under lowered eyelids, as she might have listened to a lame excuse from some one in the school.

"Poor Cottswold! How you must have felt uncomfortable—you're so faithful to your friends. No, I have never had *that* experience. If she *were* my daughter I know quite well I would have said so long ago. I can imagine myself being proud of her, even—even in those circumstances."

"I confess I'm mightily relieved," said Ommony, grinning uncomfortably. "Not, of course, that I'd have——"

"No, I know you wouldn't," she interrupted. "You are the last person on earth I would hide that kind of secret from."

"Why any kind of secret, Hannah? Am I not to be trusted?"

"Not in this instance. You're the one man who couldn't be told." Then, after a dramatic pause: "Elsa is your niece."

"Niece?" he said, and shut his teeth with a snap. That one word had solved the whole long riddle!

"Her name is Elsa Terry."

He did not speak. He leaned forward, staring at her under knitted brows, his eyes as eloquent as the silence that lasted while the Bhutani girl came in and removed the supper table.

Even after the girl had gone, for two or three minutes the only sounds were the solemn ticking of a big clock on the mantelpiece, the cracking of a pine knot in the fire, and a murmur of song from a building fifty yards away.

"You, and almost everybody else, have always believed Jack Terry and your sister Elsa vanished twenty years ago without trace," she said at last. "They didn't."

"Didn't they go to the Abor country?"

"Yes."

"You mean they're alive and you've known it all these years?"

"They have been dead nearly twenty years. I learned about it quite soon afterward. You know *now* why they went up there?"

"I've no new information. Jack Terry was as mad as a March hare——"

"I think not," Hannah Sanburn answered, her gray eyes staring at the fire. "Jack Terry was the most unselfish man I ever heard of. He adored your sister. She was a spiritual, other-worldly little woman, and that beast Kananda Pal——"

"I blame Jenkins," said Ommony, grind-

ing his teeth. "Kananda Pal was born into a black-art family and knew no better. Jenkins——"

"Never mind him now. Jack Terry did his best. Your sister Elsa used to have lapses; she would cry for days on end and write letters to Mr. Jenkins begging him to give back the mind he had stolen from her.

"No, she wasn't mad; it was obsession. I did *my* best, but I hadn't much experience in those days and she was difficult to understand; the phases of the moon seemed to have something to do with it; Jack Terry and I were agreed about that. You've met Sirdar Sirohe Singh of Tilgaun?"

Ommony nodded.

"He has always been a friend. He appears to be a mystic. He knows things that other people don't know, and hardly ever talks of them. Jack Terry learned from him—Jack set his arm, or a collar bone, I forget which—anyway he told Jack about the crystal jade of Abor."



OMMONY'S lips moved in the suggestion of a whistle and Diana opened one eye.

"All the people hereabouts seem to have heard of the jade," Hannah Sanburn went on, "but the sirdar seems to be the only one who really knows anything about it. All I know is that I have had a piece of it in my hands in this house. It nearly drove me frantic to look into it, so I locked it away in that cupboard over there.

"It was stolen by a girl I should never have trusted, and I'm nearly but not quite sure it was the sirdar who bribed her to steal it from me. She was murdered, apparently, while on the way to the sirdar's house a few miles from here. Tsiang Samdup was here last night and showed me the piece of jade; he said he had recovered it in Delhi."

"What else did he say?" asked Ommony, but she ignored the question, continuing to stare into the fire, as if she could see in it pictures of twenty years ago.

"Jack Terry told me," she went on presently, "that he believed the crystal jade of Abor had magic properties. You know how he believed in magic, and how he always insisted that magic is merely science that hasn't been recognized yet by the schools. He said mineral springs can heal the body, so there was no reason why there shouldn't

be a stone somewhere, possessed of properties that can heal the mind in certain conditions.

"I didn't agree with him. It seemed to me utter nonsense, although I'm less inclined than I was then to say things can't be simply because we have been taught the contrary. I have held a piece of the jade of Abor in my hands and—well, I don't know, and that's all about it."

She paused again, perfectly still. Ommony got up, heaped wood on the fire, and sat down again. The cracking pine knots and the ascending sparks broke her reverie.

"It was no use talking to Jack Terry," she continued, "and your sister would have gone to the North Pole with him, or anywhere else, if he had as much as proposed it. The two set off like Launcelot and Elaine into the unknown. You know, the very heart of the Abor Valley isn't more than fifty miles from here, although they say nobody has ever gone there and returned alive."

"Jack Terry—you remember how he always laughed at the impossible—said they would probably be gone not more than three or four weeks. They took hardly any supplies with them—just a tent and bedding—half a dozen ponies—two servants. The servants deserted the third night out and were killed by Bhutani robbers."

"Yes," said Ommony. "That was all I could ever find out, and *that* cost a month's investigation."

"I knew the whole story two or three weeks before you got permission to leave your forest and come to investigate; but I wasn't allowed to tell."

"Weren't allowed? Who in thunder——"

"Tsiang Samdup came down from the Abor Valley and in this room, sitting on that hearthrug where the dog lies now, told me the story. I remember how he began:

"My daughter, there is danger in another's duty. There is also duty in another's danger. There is merit in considered speech, but strength consists in silence. Truth, that may be told to one, may lead to evil if repeated. I am minded to speak to your ears only."

"Offhand I told him I would of course respect his confidence, but he sat still for about half an hour before he spoke again. Then he took at least half an hour to commit me to a pledge of secrecy that I could not possibly break without losing my own self-respect. I discovered before he was

through that he had been quite right to do that, but I confess there were moments that evening when it looked as if he had trapped me into something against which every moral fibre in me rebelled instinctively.

"For an hour I hated him. And there have been times, many times since, when it has been extremely difficult to keep the promise. However, I have kept it. It was only yesterday that he gave me leave to tell you as much as I know."

"He might have confided in me in the first place," said Ommony, but Hannah Sanburn shook her head.

"I did suggest that to him. I urged it. But he made me see that he was quite right not to. It would have placed you in an impossible position. What had happened was this: The Terrys did succeed in entering the Abor Valley."

"They seem to have undergone frightful hardships, and nobody knows how they found the way, but they did. They were hunted like animals, and when Tsiang Samdup rescued them Jack Terry was dying from wounds, hunger and exposure; he had managed somehow to find enough food for his wife, and he had persuaded her to eat, and to let him go without."

"Are you sure of your information?" Ommony asked. "That doesn't sound like Elsa."

"There was a baby coming."

"Oh, my God!"

"Tsiang Samdup took them to his monastery, which is somewhere in the Abor Valley. The only way he was able to protect them from the Abors, who have never allowed strangers in the valley and vow they never will, was by prophesying that the baby shortly to be born would be a reincarnation of an ancient Chinese saint, named San-fun-ho. There was no hope of saving Jack Terry, who had gone into galloping consumption, but Tsiang Samdup hoped to save the mother's life. However, she died giving birth to the child, and Jack Terry followed her the same night."

"Did they leave anything in writing?"

"I have letters I'll show you presently, written and signed by both of them, in which they speak of the lama Tsiang Samdup as having risked his own life to save theirs. Jack Terry wrote that he was dying of wounds and exposure. The lama gave me both letters after he had told the story."

But I would have believed him without that. I have always believed every word that Tsiang Samdup said, even while I hated him for having pledged me to silence."

"Go ahead. I mistrusted him not long ago—and changed my mind."

"Tsiang Samdup is not to be doubted, Cottswold. He lied to the Abors, but that was to save life. It was an inspiration—the only way out of it—to tell those savages that the unborn baby was to be a reincarnation of a Chinese saint. I admire him for the lie.

"Imagine, if you can, old Tsiang Samdup—for he was old even then—raising and weaning that baby in a monastery in the midst of savages! The Terrys' death seems to have made it easier in one way: The natives saw them buried, which satisfied their law against admitting strangers, and Tsiang Samdup prevented them from digging up the bodies to throw them in the river, by casting a halo of sainthood over them on the ground that they had brought a saint into the world.

"You know how all this country to the north believes implicitly in reincarnations of saints—the Tashi Lama is supposed to be the reincarnation of his predecessor; and so on. Do you see how Tsiang Samdup became more and more committed?"

There was a long silence. Ommony poked the fire restlessly. A native teacher came in, offered a report for signature, and went out. Hannah Sanburn went on with her story:

"He had promised those savages a baby saint. He had produced the baby. Now he had to educate the saint, and its being a girl made it all the more difficult. But it seems there are people to whom Tsiang Samdup can go for advice. I don't know who they are, or where they are; he mentions them rarely, and very guardedly; I think he has referred to them twice, or perhaps three times during all the years I have known him, and then only for the purpose of suggesting that he isn't exactly a free agent.

"The conclusion I drew from his guarded hints was, that he acts, and is responsible for what he does, but that he would lose the privilege of conference with these unknown individuals if he should allow personal considerations to govern him. At that, I'm only guessing. He said nothing definite."

"The Masters!" said Ommony, nodding. "I'll bet you he knows some of the Masters!"

But if Hannah Sanburn knew who they were she gave no sign. She went on talking.

"It seems that the Abors trust him implicitly within certain limits. They would kill him and burn his monastery if they caught him practising the least deception; and they watched that baby day and night. The wife of an Abor chieftain became the wet-nurse, and the child thrived, but it very soon dawned on Tsiang Samdup that however carefully he might educate her—you know he had an Oxford education?—she would grow up like a half-breed, unless he could have skillful assistance from some one of her own race.

"So he had consulted these mysterious authorities, and 'they,' whoever they are, had said that a way would open up if he should take *me* into confidence.

"As I told you, he first bound me to secrecy. He didn't make me swear, but he gave me a lecture on keeping faith, that was as radical as the Sermon on the Mount, and he tested me every inch of the way to make sure I agreed with him. I have used that sermon over and over again in teaching the teachers of this school.

"When he had me so tied up in my own explanations of what keeping faith really means, that there wasn't any possible way out for me, he told me the story I have just told you, and made me an astonishing proposal. I have sometimes wished I had accepted it."

Hannah Sanburn paused for a long time, staring at the fire. Ommony, watching her intently, wondered what imaginable occupation or adventure could seem better to her than the one she had. To him she seemed to be that rarest thing in the world: A woman in an exactly right environment with full room for the exercise of the rarest of all talents.

"He offered," she said at last, "to find some one else for my position here; to smuggle me into the Abor Valley; and to teach me more knowledge than Solomon knew—if I would give unqualified consent, and would agree to stay up there and help him educate that baby."

"And——?"

"And I refused," she said quietly. "Won't you put some more wood on the fire?"



## CHAPTER XXV

## THE COMPROMISE

*And this I know: That when the Gods have use for us they blindfold us, because if we should see and comprehend the outcome we would grow so vain that not even the Gods could preserve us from destruction.*

*Vanity, self-righteousness and sin, these three are one, whose complements are meekness, self-will and indifference.*

*But out of innate modesty comes Wisdom, because in modesty the Gods can find expression.*

*The Wise Gods do not corrupt modesty with wealth or fame, but its reward is in well-doing and in a satisfying inner vision.—From The Book of the Sayings of Tsiang Samdup.*

OMMONY stacked up the fire and resumed his seat in the leather armchair that Marmaduke had always used. Diana, belly to the blaze, barked and galloped in her sleep. Hannah Sanburn went on talking:

"Tsiang Samdup said last night that you have been with him two months. Do you know then what I mean when I say one can't argue with him? He just sat there on the hearth-rug and—it's difficult to explain—he seemed to be listening for an inside message.

"It may sound idiotic, but I received the impression of a man waiting for his own soul to talk to him. He was perfectly silent. He hardly breathed. I felt absolutely sure he would find some way out of the difficulty. But the strange thing was, that the solution came from me.

"I suppose ten minutes passed without a word said, and I felt all the while as if my mind were being freed from weights that I had never known were there. Then suddenly I spoke because I couldn't help it; I saw what to do so clearly that I simply had to tell him.

"It wasn't hypnotism. It was just the contrary. It was as if he had *dehypnotized* me. I saw all the risks and scores of difficulties. And I saw absolutely clearly the necessity of doing just one thing. I told him I would take the child for six months out of every year and treat her as if she were my own. He might have her for the other six months.

"Every single wrinkle on his dear old face smiled separately when I said that. I had hardly said it when I began to wish I hadn't; but he held me to my word.

"He brought me the baby the following week, and she was here in this building all

the while you were ranging the hills for some word of the Terrys. The hardest work I ever had to do was to keep silent when you returned here worn out and miserable about your sister's fate. But if you had been let into the secret, you would have interfered—wouldn't you? Am I right or wrong, Cottswold?"

"Of course I would never have dreamed of letting my sister's child go back to the Abor Valley."

"Yet, if Tsiang Samdup hadn't taken her every year for half a year, the Abors would have killed him. And remember: I had bound myself in advance not to tell any one—and particularly not to tell you. The lama was only able to bring her to me for six months of every year by consenting to the Abors watching her all the time she was with me.

"Whenever she has been with me Abors have watched her night and day. The excuse Tsiang Samdup gave to them was that unless she should be with me for long periods she would die and, in consequence, the Abors would find their valley invaded by white armies. They fear invasion of their valley more than anything else they can imagine. On the other hand, they regard the child as a gift from heaven and the old lama as her rightful guardian.

"I don't quite understand the situation up there; the Abors don't accept Tsiang Samdup's teachings, they have a religion of their own; and he isn't one of them; he's a Tibetan. But they recognize him as a lama, protect his monastery, and submit to his authority in certain ways. Perhaps I'm stupid; he has tried very hard to explain, and so has Elsa.

"Privately I called her Elsa, after her mother of course. Tsiang Samdup gave her the Chinese name of San-fun-ho. The word is supposed to signify every possible human virtue."

"Who called her *Samding*?" Ommony asked bluntly.

Hannah Sanburn stared.

"You know then? This isn't news? I remember now; Tsiang Samdup said last night: 'That of which a man is ignorant may well be kept from him, but that which he knows should be explained, lest he confuse it with what he does not know.'"

"I'm putting two and two together," Ommony answered. "I leaned over a monastery gallery in Darjiling. The *chela*

was straight underneath me. A beam of sunlight showed a girl's breasts. Am I right? Are San-fun-ho, Samding the *chela*, and my sister's child Elsa one and the same person?"

"Yes. I wonder you never recognized your sister's voice—that almost baritone, boyish resonance. You didn't?"

"Who are those other girls?"

"Companions for her! Don't rush me. Wait while I explain. Elsa developed into the most marvelous child I have ever known. It was partly Tsiang Samdup's influence; he gave up his whole life to training her; and he's wise—I can never begin to tell you how wise he is.

"But it was partly due to her heredity. You see, she had your sister's spiritual qualities, and something of Jack Terry's gay indifference to all the usual human pros and cons—the courage of both of them—and something else added, entirely her own. I wish she were my own child! Oh, how I wish it! And yet, d'you know, Cottswold, down in my heart I'm glad she isn't, simply because, if she were mine, she would have missed so much!"

Hannah Sanburn stared into the fire again, silent until Ommony grew restless.

"There's so much to tell!" she said at last. "I knew from the first, and Tsiang Samdup soon discovered that the odds would be all against her unless she could have white children of her own age for companions.

"When he came and spoke of that I tried to persuade him to let me send her to America; but at the very suggestion he looked so old and grieved and disappointed that I felt it would kill him to lose her. I suggested that he should go with her, but he said no, he had a duty to the Abors. I thought then he was afraid the Abors would torture him to death and burn his monastery if he should let her go; but he knew my thoughts and assured me that consideration had no weight. I believed him. I believe he is perfectly indifferent to pain and death. He sat still for a long time, and then said:

"It is better not to begin, than to begin and not go through to a conclusion. *Then* we should only have deprived ourselves of opportunity. *Now* we should rob the child."

"He asked *me* to obtain white children for companions for her. I refused, of course, at once, to have anything to do

with it. We quarreled bitterly—or rather, I did. He sat quite still, and when I had finished scolding him he went away in silence. I did not see him again for several months, and he never told me how he obtained white children.

"I can't imagine how he did it without raising a scandal all over the world. I have been in agonies over it, for fear this mission would suffer. You know, if word once got around that we were importing white children into the Abor Valley, no proof of innocence would ever quiet the suspicion. Just think what a chance the Christian missionaries would have for destroying our good name! Can you imagine them sparing us?"

Ommony grinned and nodded. As trustee of a Bhuddist mission to the Buddhists, he had tasted his share of that zealotry.

"He obtained the children through the agency of a Jew named Benjamin," he said. "They were all orphans. They were saved from — knows what. Go on."

"I have only seen the other children rarely. Now and then they would come here in twos and threes, and I used to question them, but they all seemed too happy to remember their past, and they only had the vaguest notions as to how they ever reached the Abor Valley.

"The general plan was for me to do my best with Elsa during the six months of the year she was with me, and for *her* to teach *them*. Tsiang Samdup said it would be good for her to have to teach them—that she would learn more in that way than any other; and as usual he was entirely right.

"To help the other girls he made *them* pass their teaching on to Tibetan children. But he hasn't had quite the success with the others that he has with Elsa; they hadn't her character to begin with. He never punishes. Have you any idea what patience it calls for to educate growing children without ever inflicting punishment of any kind—what patience and skill?"

Ommony glanced at Diana.

"It's the only way. I never punish," he said quietly. "Go on."

"My own share in Elsa's education has been very slight indeed," Hannah Sanburn went on. "I had to teach her western conventions as to table manners and so on, and to explain to her what sort of subjects are taboo in what we call civilized society. I have taught her to wear frocks properly,

have corrected her English pronunciation, and have given her music lessons. I can't think of anything else.

"The real education has been all the other way; it is *I* who have learned—oh, simply countless things—by observing *her*. She never argues. You can't persuade her to tell more than a fraction of what she knows. She is afraid of nothing and of nobody. And she is as full of fun as the veriest young pagan that ever lived."

"Is she affectionate?" asked Ommony.

"Intensely. But not demonstrative. I should say she loves enormously, but without the slightest jealousy or passion. She has learned Tsiang Samdup's faculty of divining people's weakness, and of playing up to their strength instead of taking advantage of the weakness or letting it annoy her. The result, of course, is that she is instantly popular wherever she goes."

"How in the world have you kept these mission girls from talking about her?" asked Ommony.

"That was quite easy. They adore her. She is *their* special secret; and they quite understand that if they talk about her outside the mission she will stay away. Besides, the mission girls don't have much opportunity to talk with outsiders, and those to whom they do talk are superstitious people, who speak with bated breath of San-fun-ho of Abor. There have been much harder problems than that."

 HANNAH SANBURN stared into the fire again. It appeared there were painful memories.

"You see, there have been European visitors at times. Some of them came unannounced, and sometimes Elsa was here when they came. There were times when I could pass her off as a teacher, but sometimes she was discovered in boy's clothes, which made that impossible; and whether she was dressed as boy or girl she aroused such intense curiosity that questions became pointed and very difficult to answer.

"I have dozens of letters, Cottswold, from friends in Massachusetts asking whether it is true, as they learn from missionary correspondents, that I have a child. Some ask why I kept my marriage secret. Some insinuate that they are too broad minded to hold a lapse from virtue against me, as long as I don't come home and make it awkward for them. Others preach me a

sermon on hypocrisy. Quite a number of my friends have dropped me altogether. I suppose the strict provisions of the penal code have kept people from libeling me in India, but that has not prevented them from writing scandal to their friends abroad."

"What was the idea of boy's clothes?" Ommony enquired.

"Education. Tsiang Samdup insists she must know everything he possibly can teach her. She has been to Lassa, far into China, and down into India. He could not have taken her to some of those places unless she were disguised as his *chela*; a girl *chela* would have aroused all sorts of scandal and difficulties.

"Then again, he says all human life is drama and the only way to teach is by dramatic presentation; but who, he asks, can present a drama unless able to act all parts in it? He says we can only learn by teaching, and can only teach by learning; and he is right, Cottswold, he is absolutely right."

"Does he propose that she shall preach a crusade, or something like that, in India?" Ommony asked frowning.

"He proposes she shall be an absolutely free agent possessed of all knowledge necessary to freedom. That tour into India was only a part of her education."

"But I saw her as Samding receiving princes of the blood and being almost worshipped," Ommony objected.

"Education. Tsiang Samdup says she will be either flattered or hated wherever she goes. He says the hatred will strengthen her. He wants to be sure no flattery shall turn her head."

"And those other girls?"

"They are to go free also, as and when she goes. Tsiang Samdup is fabulously rich. He pays for everything in gold, although I don't know where he gets it. He has secret agents all over India—sometimes I think they're all over the world. He says wherever Elsa goes, she and the other girls will be provided for and will find friends."

"Where does he propose to send them?" Ommony asked, a wave of rebellion sweeping over him. He was well schooled in self-control, but all the English in him rose against the notion of his sister's child being subject to an Oriental's whim. Education was one thing—heritage another.

Hannah Sanburn laughed. The expression of her face was firm, and yet peculiarly helpless.



"I am not to tell you that."

"Why in thunder not? You have told so much, that——"

"If you were as used as I am, Cottswold, to trusting that grand old lama, and always discovering afterward that his advice was good, you wouldn't press the point," she answered.

"My sister's child——" he began angrily; but she interrupted him.

"Don't forget: Tsiang Samdup saved the mother from death at the hands of savages. It is thanks to him, and to nobody but him, that the baby was born alive."

"Yes, but——"

"Tsiang Samdup told me, and I believe him, that your sister put the new-born baby into his arms and begged him to care for it as if it were his own. She gave him the baby with her dying breath."

"What else could she do?" asked Ommony. "Poor girl, she was——"

"Yes. But she did it," said Hannah Sanburn. "Can you name one instance in which Tsiang Samdup has failed to keep trust to the limit of his power?"

There followed a long silence, broken only by the faint murmur of singing in a hall across the rear courtyard, the falling of burned wood on the hearth, and the muttered barking of Diana chasing something in her dreams. It endured until Diana awoke suddenly, sat up, and growled. There came a man's voice from the front courtyard.

Two or three minutes later there was a knock at the door and a toothless old Sikhimese watchman announced a visitor, mumbling so that Ommony did not catch the name. A moment later Sirdar Sirohe Singh strode into the room, greeted by thundering explosions from Diana, who presently recognized him and lay down again.

The sirdar without speaking bowed profoundly, once to Hannah Sanburn, once to Ommony, then crossed the room and sat down cross-legged on the floor, with his back to a corner of the fireplace at Hannah Sanburn's right hand, where his own face was in shadow but he could see both hers and Ommony's. Diana went up and sniffed him but he took no notice of her.

"I have word," he said gruffly, at the end of three or four minutes' silence.

He seemed to expect comment.

"From whom? About what?"

The sirdar's amber eyes met Ommony's.

"You remember? When we met the first time I said I was at your disposal to escort you to another place."

Ommony nodded.

"But I am not your superior." The sirdar used a word that conveys more the relationship of a *guru* to his *chela* than can be expressed by one word in English; but at that, the significance was vague. "Do you wish to come with me?"

In the West it would have been the part of wisdom to ask when, why, whither? Twenty and odd years of India had given Ommony an insight into arguments not current in the West, however. He did not even glance at Hannah Sanburn.

"Yes."

"I am ready."

The sirdar stood up. There was magic in the air. Diana sensed it; she was trembling. Hannah Sanburn rose and placed herself between the sirdar and the fire, so that he could not pass her easily.

"Do you accept responsibility?" she asked.

The sirdar nodded.

"Will he return here?"

"As to that I am ignorant. He will arrive there."

"You will escort him safely to the lama?"

Again the sirdar nodded.

Hannah Sanburn moved and the sirdar strode past her toward the door.

Ommony started to follow him, but turned, walked deliberately up to Hannah Sanburn and kissed her, hardly knowing why, except that he admired her and possibly might never see her again. She seemed to understand.

"Good-by," she said quietly. "If you reach the Abor Valley you'll be safe enough—only do what he tells you." Then, divining his intention: "No, take the dog. I would like her, but you may need her. The lama said so. Good-by."

It was cold outside. Ommony tied on Diana's sheepskin jacket, which was hanging, cleaned and dried, from a peg in the hall. Below in the courtyard the sirdar turned and said abruptly—

"To your own room first."

It was like being led out to be shot. In the gloom in the corner near Ommony's door a brown-robed Tibetan waited, carrying something on his arm; Ommony seized Diana's collar to keep her from flying at him. He and the sirdar followed Ommony into the room and waited while he lighted the

candles; then the sirdar struck a match and lighted the overhead oil lamp.

"Where is Dawa Tsering?" Ommony asked suddenly.

The sirdar smiled, showing wonderfully even teeth that suggested not exactly cruelty, but the sort of familiarity with unavoidable unpleasantness that surgeons learn.

"He will come with us part of the way," he said in a dead-level tone of voice.

Ommony bridled at that. It touched his own sense of responsibility; and besides, he disliked the sirdar more and more each minute.

"The man is my servant. What do you propose to do to him?" he asked.

"I am not his master."

"You said 'part of the way.' What do you mean by that?"

"Wait and see," said the sirdar.

"No," Ommony answered. "I will lead no man into a trap. What do you intend?"

The sirdar spoke in undertones to the Tibetan, who tossed a bundle of garments on the bed and left the room.

"You might save time," the sirdar suggested, pointing to the bundle on the bed. His manner was polite, and more mysterious than commanding; he undid the bundle himself and spread out a Tibetan costume.

"How about you?" asked Ommony, beginning to undress.

"I go as I am."

Ommony put on the warm Tibetan clothes and examined himself in the mirror, laughed, remarked that he looked like a monk whose asceticism consisted in at least three meals a day. But he looked better when he put on a cloth cap and threw a dark shawl over it. The sirdar, walking around him, viewing him carefully from every angle, appeared satisfied.

Then Dawa Tsering came, unaccompanied by the Tibetan, standing burly and enormous in his yak-hair cloak, almost filling up the doorway.

"Thou!" he said, grinning as his eyes met Ommony's. "Say to Missish-anbun she should return my knife to me. We go where there *might* be happenings."

"Where do you suppose we are going?" Ommony asked him.

"To that old lama's roost, I take it. Between you and me, Ommonnee, I am glad to go anywhere, so be I get away from this place. My wife is in Tilgaun and has sent

two of her husbands to catch me and bring me to her!"

The sirdar grinned, watching Ommony's face.

"They practise polyandry in these hills," he remarked.

That was no news, although there was none of it around Tilgaun since the Marmaduke influence had begun to make itself felt.

"Seven husbands are enough for her," said Dawa Tsering. "I grew weary of planting her cornfields and being beaten for my trouble. I am from Spiti, where a man can have as many wives as he can manage and *they* fear *him*! Let us be off before that she-wolf's husbands catch the two of us, thou!"

Ommony nodded. The sirdar put the lights out and led the way to the outer gate, Dawa Tsering following, complaining bitterly about his knife.

"I am ashamed, Ommonnee—I am ashamed to go back to Spiti without my belly-ripper! Where shall I find such another as that? Get it for me! I would pay its weight in gold for it—if I had that much gold," he added *sotto voce*.

Once outside the gate, though, he was too eager to be going to fret about anything else. The whites of his eyes showed alert in the darkness. There were two ponies; he held Ommony's, urging him to mount in haste, then ran behind, slapping the pony's rump, pursuing the sirdar's beast, that cantered with the Tibetan clinging to its tail. Diana circled around and around the party, barking.

"Thou! Command thy she-dog!" Dawa Tsering panted. "We go through the village—she will awake my wife's husbands—command her to be still, or we are lost!"

## CHAPTER XXVI

### ABOR VALLEY GATE

#### HOPE

*Oh, I went where the Gods are, and I have seen the Dawn*

*Where Beauty and the Muses and the Seven Reasons dwell,*

*And I saw Hope accoutred with a lantern and a horn*

*Whose clarion and rays reach the inner rings of hell.*

*Oh, I was in the storhouse of the jewels of the dew*

*And the laughter of the motion of the wind-blown grass,*

*The mystery of morning and its music, and the hue*

*Of the petals of the roses when the rain-clouds pass.*

*And so I know who Hope is and why she never sleeps,*

*And seven of the Secrets that are jewels on her breast;  
I stood within the Silence of the Garden that she keeps,  
Where flowers fill the footprints that her sandals  
pressed;  
And I know the springs of laughter, for I trod the  
Middle Way,  
Where sympathies are sign-posts and merry Gods the  
Guides;  
I have been where Hope is Ruler and evolving realms  
obey;  
I know the Secret Nearness where the Ancient Wisdom  
hides.*

THEY cantered down the village street and over an echoing plank bridge beneath which starlit water growled over a gravel bed. Only a rare light or two shone through the chinks of shuttered windows. Village dogs yelped at Diana's heels, but fled when she turned on them. The sirdar never glanced backward but rode like a shadow, bolt-upright, vanishing, vanishing, forever vanishing into the darkness, yet never more than half a dozen pony's lengths ahead. The sound of his pony's feet was all that made a human being of him; otherwise he was a spectre.

The track rose sharply after they crossed the bridge and the ponies slowed to a walk, the sirdar maintaining the lead. Dawa Tsering, utterly winded, sat down on a rock, swaying his body back and forward to ease the stitch in his side.

Ommony drew rein to wait for him, peering over a cliff side into hollow darkness filled with the booming of water among rocks two hundred feet below. The sirdar shouted from around a bend a little higher up the trail, and stones fell into the track as if his voice had loosed an avalanche.

A dark figure shrouded in black cloth slid down following the stones and, before Ommony could move, had jumped to his rein. A young woman's face peered up at him, flashing white teeth, but the smile vanished instantly.

"Dawa Tsering," she muttered, and then began talking so fast that Ommony could hardly understand her.

Dawa Tsering was in danger; that seemed clear enough. Also, she, her own self, wanted him, desired him desperately. She had a baby wrapped in a shawl slung over her shoulder and had laid another bundle on the ground.

Ommony pointed down the track, and as he moved his arm two men leaped out of a shadow and rushed uphill at Dawa Tsering. Diana flew at them and they backed away.

They had weapons, but appeared afraid to use them. Dawa Tsering ran uphill toward Ommony, feeling for the knife that was not there, and Ommony whistled to Diana. The two men followed her cautiously, advancing step by step as she retreated, snarling. From the opposite direction, around the bend, the sirdar came cantering back downhill, sending stones scattering over the cliff side.

The girl flung herself at Dawa Tsering, seizing him around the neck and pouring out a stream of words, half intelligible, choked with anger, grief, laughter, command, and emotions unknown to those who have not loved and do not still love an adventurer from Spiti.

"Sooner than expected!" the sirdar grunted, drawing rein.

The sirdar seemed pleased, and to have changed his mind about being in a hurry. He sat bolt-upright on his pony and waited in silence for something to happen; but the Tibetan behind him drew a long knife and showed it to the two men who were standing in the attitude of wrestlers. Dawa Tsering seemed to want to run, but the woman clung to him. Diana growled thunderously but awaited orders.

"Who are these men?" asked Ommony.

"My wife's husbands!" Dawa Tsering shook the girl off and stepped between Ommony and the sirdar.

It appeared he meant to slip away, but the sirdar's pony made a sudden half turn, and there was nothing left for him but to stand or jump over the cliff.

"Protect me, Ommony! I have been a friend to you. That dog hasn't a flea on her. Moreover, Missish-anbun has my knife."

"Who is this young woman?" Ommony demanded.

The sirdar answered. The two husbands were about to speak, but waited, open-mouthed. The woman was watching the sirdar as if destiny hung on the movement of his lips.

"She is his. It is his child. Choose!" he commanded, shoving Dawa Tsering, making him turn to face him. "Go with *her* to Spiti, or go with *them* to Ladak and the wife of many husbands. Which?"

"But how do I know it is my child?" Dawa Tsering grumbled.

The sirdar's face was in darkness from the shadow of the overhanging cliff. He did



not laugh, but his smile was almost audible.

"*She* knows. You may learn from her. Choose quickly!"

"Is it a man child?" Dawa Tsering asked; and the woman burst into excited speech, beginning to unwrap the bundle that swung at her back.

"Well, that is different," said Dawa Tsering. "If it is a man child—there is need of men in Spiti. Very well, I will take the woman."

"To Spiti!" the sirdar commanded. "Understand: I will write to the Raja of Spiti. You will stay in Spiti and obey him. If you ever again cross the boundaries of Spiti without a letter from your raja giving permission and stating the reason for it, you will deal with *me*!"

"Oh, well!" said Dawa Tsering, shrugging his broad shoulders. "Must I go now?"

"Now!" said the sirdar.

"Good-by, Ommonee. Now you must pick your own fleas off the dog. I will be sorry for you when I think of you without a servant, but I am too well born to be any man's servant for long, and this woman is a good one. I will sing songs of you in Spiti after you are dead. I think you will die soon. Look out for that sirdar; he is a tricky fellow."

He kicked the bundle the woman had dropped, as a signal to her to pick it up and follow him. In another moment he had vanished, clambering by a goat-track up the cliff, humming cheerfully through his nose each time he paused to let the laden woman overtake him.

The sirdar faced the discontented husbands, lifting his right hand for silence.

"Go back to that woman in Ladak,\* and to her say this from me," he ordered. "That it may be I will come to Ladak. *If* I come, and *when* I come, it will be well for her if I have no reason to concern myself about her. Turn neither to the right nor to the left, nor delay on the road to Ladak, but hasten and tell her my message.

"And when she has beaten you, tell her a second time, and add this: That if again she sends men across the boundaries of Ladak, she shall lose them! Go!"

They went, retreating backward downhill toward Tilgaun, whence the only negotiable track led over a seventeen-thousand

foot pass toward their own polyandrous neighborhood. The Tibetan followed them, presumably to see the order was obeyed. The sirdar turned and rode uphill in silence, keeping the middle of the track so that Ommony had no room to draw alongside. On the left a cliff fell sheer into the darkness; on the right it rose until it seemed to disappear among the stars.



OMMONY rode with his woollen clothes wrapped closely against the penetrating wind that moaned from over the ravine on his left hand. Mystified by the sirdar's confidently used authority, that could not possibly have been vested in him by the British or by any other government, for it seemed to extend into several states, his sensations began to be mixed and bewildering.

It was all very well to know that Dawa Tsering was a most unconscionable coward; but he was a cheerful blackguard, whose company would have been a great deal better than none in the circumstances. He was vastly more companionable than the sirdar. He seemed to know the way to everywhere, and was a rascal whose bark was worse than his bite—not dependable, but not exactly treacherous. His last words were a warning that the sirdar was a "tricky fellow," and, though he was a liar with unlimited imagination, it might be—

Suggestions of that kind are assertive on a dark night, riding into the unknown, without a weapon; and the sirdar's mysterious silence was not reassuring. Hannah Sanburn had said he was "always a friend;" but a woman all alone in charge of a mission, surrounded by potential danger, would be likely to overestimate the friendship of any one who was not openly hostile.

Philosophy is one thing; reasoning from circumstances is another. It is difficult to keep the brain from multiplying wild imaginations when wilderness is all around and facts refuse to adjust themselves to common formula. It occurred to Ommony, and kept on recurring, however hard he tried to dismiss the thought, that, with the exception of Hannah Sanburn, he alone knew the secret about Elsa Terry—he and probably that sirdar just ahead of him; and the sirdar might be one of those dark fanatics whom jealousy turns into murderers. What if the sirdar were leading him now to his death in the unknown?

\*Spiti and Ladak are Hill-states separated by huge ranges, and their customs are as different as their climate and geography, although their actual distance apart is not great.

Argument followed argument, bombarding his brain out of the darkness. For what purpose had Elsa been educated? Why had she been taken into India on that weird dramatic venture? Why had she been to Lassa, the "forbidden city?" Who were the men, to whom Hannah Sanburn said that the lama went for advice? What was *their* purpose? The lama might easily be a saint and yet their tool—an unworldly old altruist in the hands of men who had designs on India; as pliable in their hands as the girl appeared to be pliable in his.

That journey into India might have been a trial venture to discover how far the girl's trained personality could be counted on to turn men's—and women's—heads. Ghandi in jail, all India was ripe and waiting for a new political *mahatma*.

Then—the Abor Valley. Was it likely that the sirdar could be leading him into that forbidden country for any other purpose than to make sure of his death, or, possibly, to keep him prisoner up there? No white man, no government agent, not even one trained Nepalese spy who had penetrated the Abor Valley had ever returned alive. The only one who ever did return had floated, dead and mangled, down the Brahmaputra River.

Thirty-five miles—not a yard more—from the boundary of Sikkim; perhaps thirty miles from where they were that minute, the Upper Abor Valley was as unknown as the mountains of the moon. Why should he suppose that *he* was to be specially favored with permission to go in there and return alive?

But there was no turning back now—nothing, of course, to prevent but nothing farther from intention. Afraid, yes. Faint-hearted, no. The two emotions are as the poles apart. Fear acted as a spur to obstinacy, the unknown as a lure that beckoned more compellingly than safety; habitually, since his school days, personal safety had been Ommony's last, least consideration.

He told himself it was the cold wind that made the goose flesh rise, and all that night, shivering, he forced himself to believe that was the truth, following the sirdar's pony along trails like a winding devil's stairway that led alternately toward the sky and down again into a roaring underworld.

It was pitch-dark, but the deepest darkness lay ahead, where the enormous range of the Himalayas was a wall of silence

ridged with faint silver where the starlight shone on everlasting snow. Darkness may be a substance for all that anybody knows about it; it lay thick and somber, swallowing the sounds—sudden, crashing sounds, that volleyed and were gone.

A tree fell into a watercourse. A rock went cannoning from crag to crag and plunged into an abyss. Silence; and then a howl against the wind as a night prowler scented the ponies.

Bats—unimaginable thousands of them, black, and less black than the night—until the air was all alive with movement and the squeak and smell. Chasms into which the ponies' hoofs struck stones that seemed to fall forever, soundless.

Dawn at last, touching untrodden peaks with crimson, gleaming gold, and stealing, lemon-colored, down the pillars of the sky, to awaken ghosts of shadows in the black ravines. Tree-tops, waist-deep in an opal mist; an eagle—seven thousand feet below the track circling beneath them like a fleck of blown dirt. A roar ascending, full of crashing tumult; and at last a flash of silver on the waves of Brahmaputra, a mile and a half below, plunging toward Bengal through the rock staked jaws of Abor Valley Gate.

Downward then, by a trail that seemed to swing between earth and sky, the ponies sliding half the time with their rumps against the rock or picking their way cautiously with six-inch strides along the edge of chasms, over which the riders peered into fathomless shadow that the sunlight had not reached. Down to the eagle-level, and the tree-line, where the wet scent of morning on moss and golden gravel made the ponies snort and they had to be unsaddled and allowed to roll.

Not a word from the sirdar, although he stroked Diana's head when she approached him, and laughed at the ponies' antics. On again downward, and a hut at last, built of tree-trunks, perched on a ledge of rock above a waterfall, on the rim of a tree-hung bowl through which the Brahmaputra plunged.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### UNDER THE BRAHMAPUTRA

#### CHANT PAGAN

*When that caressing light forgets the hills  
That change their hue in its evolving grace;  
When, harmony of swaying reeds and rills,  
The breeze forgets its magic and the face*

*Of Nature smiles no longer in the pond,  
 Divinity revealed! When morning peeps  
 Above earth's rim, and no bird notes respond;  
 When half a world in mellow moonlight sleeps  
 And no peace pours along the silver beam;  
 When dew brings no wet wonder of delight  
 On jeweled spider web and scented lair  
 Of drone and hue and honey; when the night  
 No longer shadows the retreating day,  
 Nor purple dawn pursues the grayling dark;  
 And no child laughs; and no wind bears away  
 The bursting glory of the meadow lark;  
 Then—then it may be—never until then  
 May death be dreadful or assurance wane  
 That we shall die a while, to waken when  
 New morning summons us to earth again.*

Smoke came from the hut through a hole in the roof, giving the sharp air a delicious tang, all mixed with the aroma of fallen leaves and pine trunks. Over beyond the hut spray splashed from the waterfall—rose-colored diamonds against moss-green. The air was full of bird music, that the ear caught after it was once used to the ponderous roar of water.

A man who was undoubtedly an Abor—black hair low down on his forehead, high up on his cheeks—Mongolian cheek-bones—glittering, dark, bold eyes, hairy legs showing beneath a leather-colored smock, waist girdled with a leather belt, from which a *kukri* like a Gurkha's hung in a wooden scabbard—peered from the hut door. He stared at the sirdar in silence, curiously, as at some one he must tolerate; it was the half shy, half impudent stare of a yokel at a wealthy man from town.

He took the ponies and was very careful of them, unsaddling, leading them to drink, dragging out a sack and spilling grain in the hollow of a rock, feeling their legs and rubbing them down with a piece of bark while they munched contentedly.

The sirdar led the way into the hut, but laid a finger on his lip for silence. The reason for silence was not evident; there was nobody else in there. The place was clean, but almost bare of furniture; there was a hearth of rough stones in the midst, a rough table, and a bunk in one corner, littered with blue trade blankets.

There was no bench, no chairs or stools, but there were wooden platters on the table, with big silver spoons beside them, and on the hearth imported cereal was cooking in an earthen vessel set in a brass one containing water. There was honey in a white china bowl, and a big glass pitcher full of milk, which looked as if it had stood

there overnight; the layer of cream was more than an inch thick. There were two cups, without handles, made of alabaster.

In silence, as if it were a ritual, the sirdar served the meal and they ate it standing. Then he walked out and sat on a rock that overhung the waterfall. He was not cross-legged in the usual Indian attitude of meditation; his long, booted and spurred legs were out in front of him, the way a white man sits, and he leaned an elbow on one knee, his chin on his right fist; motionless in that attitude he stared at the bewildering view until he seemed almost physically to become a part of it.

Ommony watched him from the hut door, now and then losing sight of his form in the spray as he wondered what sort of thinking it might be that could so absorb the man.

And as he watched, wondering, his own inclination was to take his shoes off; he felt a pagan reverence possess him, as if that dew-wet, emerald and brown immensity with the thundering river below and the blue sky for a roof, were a temple of Mother Nature, in which it were impertinence to speak, imposture to assert a personality.

Diana was watching fish in a pool above the waterfall; the aborigine from Abor was using his *kukri* to fashion a wooden implement with which to comb the ponies' manes and tails; the birds were hopping on tree and rock about their ordinary business, and an eagle circled overhead as if he had been doing the same thing for centuries. But there began to be a sensation of having stepped into another world.

Things assumed strange, and strangely beautiful proportions. The whole of the past became a vaguely remembered dream, in which the lama, Samding and Hannah Sanburn stood out as the only important realities. The present moment was eternity, and wholly satisfying. Every motion of a glistening leaf, each bird note, every gesture of the nodding grass, each drop of spray was, of and in itself, in every detail perfect.

Something breathed—he did not know what, or want to inquire—he was part of what breathed; and a universe, of which he was also a part, responded with infinite rhythm of color, form, sound, movement, ebb and flow, life and death, cause and effect, all one, yet infinitely individual, enwrapped in peace and wrought of magic,



of which beauty was the living, all-conceiving light.

The enchantment ceased as gradually as it had begun. He felt his mind struggling to hold it—knew that he had seen Truth naked—knew that nothing would ever satisfy until he should regain that vision—and was aware of the sirdar walking toward him, normal, matter-of-fact, abrupt, spurs clinking as his heels struck rock.

"Are you ready?" asked the sirdar.

Ommony whistled and Diana followed them along a fern-hung ledge. There was opal air beneath them; crags and tree-tops peered out of slow-moving mist that the sun was beginning to tempt upward. Presently, leaping from rock to rock, until they could hear the river laughing and shouting, sending echoes crashing through a forest that had looked like moss from higher up, they descended breathless, downward, and forever downward, leaping wild water that gushed between worn boulders, swinging by tree roots around outleaning cliffs, Diana crouching as she hugged the wall along a six-inch ledge, crossing a yelling cataract by a fallen tree-trunk, whose ax-marks were the only sign that the trail was ever used before.

They came at last to a bank with a cliff behind it, still more than a thousand feet above the Brahmaputra, whose thunder volleyed as if a battle were being fought for right of way through a rock-and-tree-staked gorge defended by all the underworld.

Ommony threw himself down, panting, his clothes sodden with sweat and his head in a whirl from the violent exertion and the change of altitude. Every sinew in his legs was trembling separately, and his heart thumped like a steam injector. Diana lay still at his feet. The sirdar appeared calm and not particularly out of breath; he sat down on a rock near by with an air of concentrated attention.

Presently Ommony began to feel the chill of damp earth under him. He got to his feet to look for a better place closer to the cliff, and stood for a moment craning upward trying to gage with his eye the distance they had come from the lip of the ravine that showed at one point sharp as a pencil-line against the sky.

He realized he could never find the way back if life depended on it, and guessed there must be another way than that into the Abor Valley, or how could men and animals

find egress? He turned to speak, leaning one hand against the cliff.

"This way!" said the sirdar's voice on his left hand; and before he could turn he felt himself shoved violently.

His head still singing from the strain of the descent, a vertigo still swimming through his brain, he was sure, but only dimly, that he had been pushed, then pulled through a narrow fissure in the shadowy corner of a projecting spur.

He had hardly noticed the opening—had not observed that the lower portion of the spur was split away, like the base of a flying buttress, from the wall itself. Within, the opening turned and turned again, a man's breadth wide each shoulder against the wall, a zigzag passage driven (there were tool marks) into a granite mountain; and when he turned to look there was nothing to see but the outline of the sirdar's head against dim light behind him.

Diana forced her way between his legs and ran ahead to explore; he could hear her hollow barking—"all's well so far; marvelous! mysterious! exciting!"—and then the sirdar shoved him forward, saying not one word. He could not see, but felt the whirring of bats, and knew by the sound that he had stepped into a cavern.

The sirdar groped and found an oil lantern with a bail. Lighting it, and swinging it until the shadow leaped like giant goblins and enormous bats streamed in panic toward the open air, he led the way to a low tunnel at the rear through which it was just possible to walk by bending nearly double.

At the end of fifty yards of that uncomfortable going, there was vastness, black as pitch, and such empty silence that the ear drums ached. The lantern light shone into nothing and was swallowed—ceased, except where it struck the natural, dark granite wall and the end of the hewn tunnel.

They were standing on a platform ten feet wide, from which hewn steps descended forever and ever for all the brain could guess. The roof was utterly invisible; the space beneath it was alive with whirling bats. The air was breathable but stuffy. Sweat began to stream from every pore.

"What next?" asked Ommony.

"What next—ot nex—ot nex—ot nex—ot nex!" the echoes answered, dying away in a grumble at last somewhere in the bowels of the world.

He did not care to speak again. He tried

to suppress thought, lest the echoes should learn that and multiply and mock it in the solemn hugeness of the underworld: Diana was afraid now—crouched against his legs and howled when the sirdar started down the smooth stone steps, that looked dark-green in the lantern light.

The howl let loose the hounds of Pandemonium. A fantom pack gave tongue in full cry, as it were, down the valley of hell, pounced on their quarry leagues away, worried it, and vanished into silence. The sirdar laughed, and the laugh went after them until a thousand fiends seemed to mock the ghost the hounds had slain.

Diana was seized with panic and had to be dragged by the collar. Ommony did not dare speak to her for fear of the echoes. He tried whispering, once, but only once; it turned into a hiss that made Diana tremble in abject misery.

The echo of their feet was bad enough. Each downward step was repeated until the darkness became full of a din like the clapping of unseen hands; the clink of the sirdar's spurs was multiplied into the jingle and clank of ghostly squadrons, and the whirring of unseen bat wings grew into the snort of the war horses charging line on line. It was easy enough to imagine lance and pennon, and the dead from a thousand battlefields repeating history.

Ommony began trying to count the steps, but lost the reckoning at the sixth or seventh turn; the stairway zigzagged to and fro across the face of a wall that seemed from its smooth yet irregular feel to have been hewn by giants from the virgin rock. And when they did at last reach bottom there appeared by the swinging lantern light to be a causeway running right and left, gray-white and firm with a million years' accumulation of the bats' excreta.

 THE sirdar hesitated—took the right-hand way, and led with a swinging stride that it took all of Ommony's strength to follow. There was hardly any echo now, because the bat-dirt underfoot consumed the sound, and filled the air, too, with acrid dust, but there began to be a weird, very far away rumbling at first not more than a peculiar, irregular pulsation of the silence, gradually increasing until it sounded as if all the echoes in the world were hiding in the cellar of a mountain, crowding one another to find room.

7

A roof became vaguely visible at last. They were entering a tunnel, whose floor sloped downward. It appeared to have been originally a natural fissure in the base of a granite mountain; Titans had hewn and enlarged it, leaving buttresses, six feet square, of natural rock, that curved overhead until they met to support the roof.

They were spaced about twenty feet apart, and every gap between was occupied by an enormous image, hewn out of the wall, resembling nothing in the world that Ommony had ever seen. Vaguely, but only vaguely, they suggested temple images of ancient Egypt. No two were alike. Due to the moving shadows, they appeared to change position as the lantern passed them, and the weird sounds that filled the tunnel suggested conversation in the language of another world.

The only remark the sirdar made of any kind was midway down the tunnel, more than a quarter of a mile from the point where its roof had first become dimly visible. He paused for a moment, seemed to hesitate whether or not to speak, then pointed upward.

"We are under the Brahmaputra."

His voice sounded muffled. The noise of the tremendous river galloping and plunging overhead absorbed all other sounds.

"How thick is the roof?" Ommony asked. But he did not know how to pitch his voice; the words died on his lips; his own ears could not hear them.

In one place there was water; it appeared to be an artificial drain; there was a trickling, sucking sound where it disappeared through a hole in the wall into obscurity. The floor for twenty yards was built of very heavy timber spiked on to transverse beams laid in slots in the rock wall; the slots were very ancient and the timbers not a generation old, marked here and there with the print of ponies' hoofs—which seemed to Ommony to prove one point at any rate. There must be another way out from the Abor Valley than that goat path down the side of the ravine.

No pony, laden or unladen, could negotiate the trail by which he and the sirdar had come, nor could a pony pass through the fissure by which they had entered the cavern, or climb those prodigious stairs.

Once they had crossed the wooden bridge the track began to rise, but the sirdar continued leading at the same speed,

neither heat nor stuffiness impeding him. He swung the lantern in his right hand with an air of indifference, as if he had long ago ceased wondering at the Titan labors of the men who hewed the tunnel.

There was no air of haste about him; his natural speed appeared to be more than four miles an hour, just as his natural mood was silent, and his natural condition fearless, unsurprized, indifferent to circumstance.

The air began to improve at last, as they emerged into a cavern into which one shaft of sunlight shone through an opening so high overhead that its milky-whiteness, spreading and dispersing, formed a layer below which the gloom grew solid. The sensation was of being in a grotto underwater and looking upward through a cave-mouth toward the surface of the sea. One almost expected to see fish swimming across the zone of light.

The sirdar allowed Ommony to rest at last. He sat on a rock that resembled an altar, set the lantern on another, and motioned to Ommony to be seated on a third. There were seven stones, exactly similar in shape and size, arranged so as to suggest the constellation of the Pleiades; \* the seventh, which might be Merope, was surrounded by a circle of masonry, perhaps to suggest that that one is invisible to the naked eye.

About and among the big stones there were hundreds of smaller ones, all of the same shape but of different sizes, arranged in no evident pattern, but nevertheless sunk into place in hollows cut deliberately in the rock floor. It looked as if whoever set them there knew a great deal more about the stars than any naked eye reveals.

As Ommony grew gradually used to the dim light the shapes of enormous carvings revealed themselves on walls so high that imagination reeled in the effort to measure them. The shape of the cavern was that of the inside of a hollow tree-trunk, broad at the base, narrowing toward the top until it vanished in impenetrable gloom somewhere above the shaft of light.

The walls were all irregular, almost exactly resembling in rough outline the interior of a hollow tree; and wherever there

was space a figure had been carved, half human, ponderous, as contemplative as the Sphinx.

Wherever the eye rested long enough a figure would develop in the gloom, until the darkness appeared full of awful faces that had been there, pondering immensity, since time began.

As well as Ommony could judge, they were in the core of a hollow granite mountain. He turned to question the sirdar, but as he moved a sound like a distant trumpet blast came from above and, glancing upward, he saw a speck that might be a human being, moving on the lip of the opening through which the shaft of light came. Diana howled at the sound, but the howl was lost in the enormous space; there were no echoes.

The sirdar made no comment, but got to his feet at once and holding up the lantern examined Ommony's face for a moment intently.

His expression was of exercising judgment, but he said nothing, did not even nod. His amber eyes looked hardly human in the dimness, and glowed with a reddish light behind them—leonine, but curiously passionless. Swinging the lantern again, he turned and led the way toward a projection outflung like a buttress from the nearest wall.

There began then an ascent that almost conquered physical endurance. Steps, whose treads, hewn from the rock, were eighteen inches high, followed the outline of the ragged walls and circled the whole huge cavern three times toward the opening through which the light poured in.

There were places, but not many of them, where the way ran almost level along a ledge for fifty feet or so, and thigh muscles had a chance to rest from the agony of climbing. The only other resting places were the crowns of smooth, gigantic heads that gazed forever into vastness.

There was no rail, no balustrade; the steps were nowhere more than three feet wide, with nothing on their outer edge but darkness and a terrifying certainty of what would happen if a foot slipped or if vertigo prevailed.

Diana, thrusting herself between the wall and Ommony, pressed herself against him for the sake of human company, adding to the terror of the long ascents where no huge head projected to afford a sense of

\*The ancient Greek legend of the Pleiades is that they were the daughters of Atlas and Pleione, and that the seventh, Merope, concealed herself out of shame for having loved a mortal. But the legend is doubtless vastly older than the Greeks and has an esoteric, or hidden meaning. A telescope reveals hundreds of stars in the constellation.



something solid between the wall and the abyss.

The sirdar seemed tireless. Ommony ached in every sinew of his being. Blood sang in his ears and eyes. Thirst began to torture him. A stitch like a knife stab gnawed under his ribs. Repeatedly he had to lie face downward on a level place, pressing both hands tightly on the stone while the whole cavern and all the silent heads seemed to whirl and whirl around him.

Then Diana licked the back of his neck, and the sirdar waited twenty or thirty yards higher up, swinging the lantern as if its constant rhythmic movement were in some way necessary.

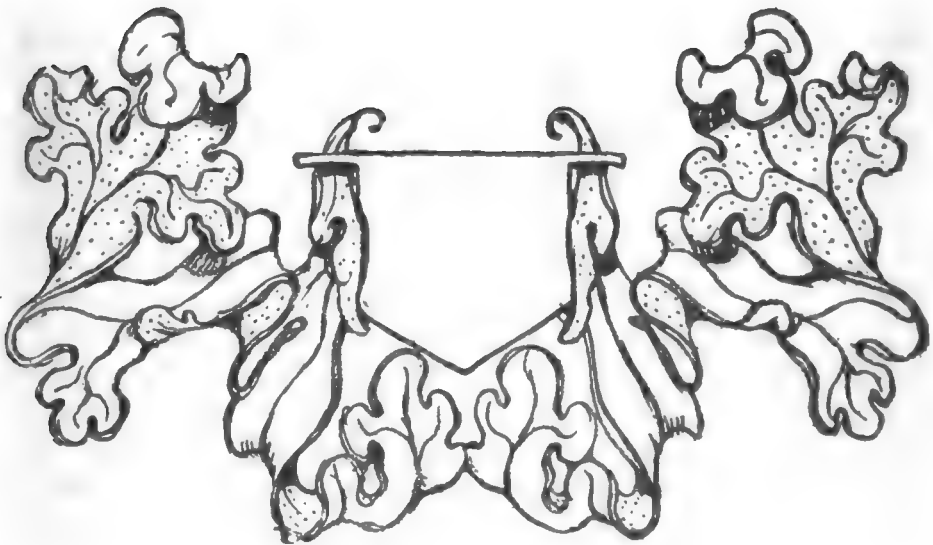
He never spoke once, made no sound other than his footsteps and the clink of spurs, all the way up; but now and then he

stood on the crown of a head overhanging the cavern and swung the lantern in wider sweeps, as if he were signaling to some one.

The shaft of light faded and almost disappeared before they reached the opening. Ommony was in no condition then to reckon up the hours or to guess at the height he had climbed. No more than barely conscious, he collapsed on a smooth platform that sloped dangerously outward, his fingers trying to grip the rock and his feet continuing to climb.

He felt the sirdar—or somebody—seize him by the arm pits, heard Diana growl, and the next he knew he was lying face upward with cool water on his lips, a cool breeze on his face, and a starlit sky overhead. He felt Diana nosing at his hair, and knew nothing after that for several hours.

TO BE CONCLUDED





# Mississippi Moonshine

## A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

### by William P. Barron

Author of "A Wife in Every Port," "The Tale of a Rooster," etc.

**B**IG'UN" stood on the New Orleans levee and looked with a jaundiced eye at the swirling flood of the Father of Waters. The engines of the *Maggie May* had gone on the blink and she had docked at New Orleans for repairs. Big'Un knew just enough of the New Orleans waterfront to be afraid of it. Therefore he was shy of the laughing, lounging crowd of carefree colored folk who loitered all day along the streets of the Creole city. He longed for Galveston, his home town, with its familiar colored "restaraws" and fish parlors, where one could shoot craps or sit in at a gentleman's game of Coon-Can in peace and quiet.

However, as he gazed up river at the busy tugs, and an occasional steamboat bound for Memphis or Vicksburg, his vagrant eye caught a "Hot-Cat" sign blazoned across the cabin roof of a moored houseboat. And to further proclaim its delectable function several large defunct or slowly dying catfish were hanging by the gills from the eaves of the gallery that shaded the deck. The freshening off-shore breeze wafted the appetizing odor of frying fish to Big'Un's broad and receptive nostrils, and a gentle salivary moisture came in his mouth. At least a man must eat, even if far from home,

and homesick. He would follow his nose.

He turned into the river path, and in a few minutes stood on the gangplank of the Hot-Cat boat, looking in the screened window at a comely young colored woman who was frying catfish steaks on a small oil-stove.

"Lady," inquired Big'Un, "kin I git somethin' to eat at this place?"

"You shorely kin, big boy!" she answered beamingly. "Come right in, an' rest yourself! Now then," she continued hospitably, rubbing off the oilcloth table-cover with her apron, as Big'Un sat down, "what will you choose? We has partials fer two bits, an' completes fer four bits."

"Says which?" inquired Big'Un, puzzled at her culinary classification.

"Partials is two catfish steaks, three slices o' bread an' a cup o' coffee. Completes is all you kin eat an' drink uv dem three things. Better take a complete, big boy; you appearances to be a noble eater," and she showed her perfect teeth in a comprehending grin at Big'Un's huge frame.

Big'Un started to remark, "Dat's whut muh wife says," but he changed his mind. Why should he classify himself in a strange country? So he contented himself with:

"Lady, I shorely is a good eater. Bring on de complete. Here's de four bits," and he place fifty cents in her capable hand.

"Mississippi Moonshine," copyright, 1924, by William P. Barron.

Big'Un ate until the fried catfish and dripped coffee had lost their tempting flavor. Then he leaned back, picking his teeth with a horn toothpick contained in a holder carved in the shape of a woman's shapely limb, which dangled as a charm from his large silver watch-chain.

The young woman had waited patiently for some sign of repletion, that favorable, compliant moment which, feminine instinct taught her, waits upon a full stomach in the male. She wanted to satisfy her consuming curiosity as to who this strange giant might be. He was new to the waterfront. She was sure of that, for neatly cataloged in her mind was every stevedore, longshoreman, canal-boatman and coastwise-steamer-merchant of her color that frequented the port of New Orleans. This man was not one of these.

"Ain't you jest come in from de Lorio plantation, big boy? Seems like I seen you up dere at the sugar-cane mill last fall."

"No, ma'am, 'twarn't me," Big'Un enlightened her. "I'se de fireman on de *Maggie May*, one of de fruit company's boats."

"Oh, you is! Well, I know'd you didn't belong in New Orleans," the colored Delilah continued, "'cause I knows all de colored men er'round here."

She came nearer and leaned over Big'Un's chair, ostensibly to shoo away the flies that were holding a carnival among the ruins of the "complete" which was still on the table.

"Say, big boy," she whispered, "does you crave a dram of good gin?"

Big'Un's bump of caution was in due proportion with the rest of his sizable head. He had heard many boiler-room yarns of lonely sailormen in New Orleans, doped and shanghaied with "Nigger Gin." Or even more harrowing tales of those who after one drink, had landed in jail and thence to the chief of police and his justly celebrated chain-gang. These recited terrors had lost nothing in the telling.

"No, lady," he declined, "I most in seldom drinks, leastways not right after I eats. But I would crave to buy a bottle ifen you has some handy."

The girl hesitated, looked out the window then went in the next cabin. After a few minutes she returned—

"I ain't got none on hand now, big boy; come back after 'while."

"When?" inquired Big'Un.

"Oh! 'Bout five o'clock."

With nothing to do until five o'clock, Big'Un strolled up and down the waterfront until the telepathy of kindred souls led him to a friendly crap game, safely ensconced among cotton bales far from the prying eyes of riverfront cops. Here he spent the time pleasantly and profitably until time to return to the Hot-Cat boat.

This time, however, he approached his objective cautiously, tiptoeing stealthily over the small gangplank and along the deck to where a dim light showed through the far window. He peered in. The young woman, with her back to the window, sat at a table upon which was a large, well-equipped radio. With the receivers on her ears, she was listening intently. The cabin was otherwise equipped as a bed-chamber, with a small bureau, a mosquito-canopied bed, a large pine-board chest and a trunk.

Big'Un, having satisfied his curiosity, tiptoed back to the gangplank, stepped to the door and knocked.

"Hello lady, is you in there?"

"Yes, I is in here." She came to the screen door and unhooked it. "But I ain't got your gin, big boy. It ain't come yet. But it will be here all right after awhile. Come in an' rest yourself." She shoved a chair toward him. "I'll be back in a minute," and she ran back into the next cabin.

Big'Un followed her softly and looked in. She was again at the radio, listening.

"Let me listen too, lady. I has allus wanted to hear how one o' them things sounded."

The young woman gave a startled cry and turned with a distrustful look on her face, that changed instantly to a smile as she saw Big'Un's ingenuous countenance.

"All right! Come an' lissen! You won't hear much." She indicated another set of ear-pieces. "Put 'em on and lissen."

"What do you hear?" she asked after an interval.

"I hears a rev'rund preachin'," Big'Un answered with an incredulous grin. "You shore it ain't no phonygraph?"

The woman did not answer. She snatched up her own ear-pieces and adjusted them. Her face became tense and interested.

"An' brethren an' sistern," droned the voice in the radio. "Whut matter when de Lawd do come, ifen hits two o'clock in de day, or one o'clock at night. I axes you, whut diffunce do hit make? We must be



watchin' an' ready, at one o'clock in de night same as any other time. Now de choir will sing, 'Don't Be Like dem Foolish Virgins When de Bridegroom Comes,' an' we'll be dismissed till Saturday."

The young woman answered Big'Un's look of inquiry with:

"Dat's de Rev'rund Elder Abe Johnson from somewheres up de river. Every Wednesday and Saturday he gives whut dey calls a 'Radio Radiance uv de Spirit.' He preaches on one of dem Gospel Boats. He is shorely some powerful preacher when he gits warmed up good. You jest orter hear him sometimes."

"Kin you hear anything you wants to euten dat box?" Big'Un asked eagerly, for the radio bug had stung him.

"You just kin do dat very thing!" the girl exclaimed. The uneasy look had left her face. She seemed satisfied, even exhilarated. "An' say big boy——"

"An' how much does dey cost?" interrupted the newly-born radio reptile.

"Oh, forty—fifty—two hundred dollars," she answered carelessly. "Whatever you wants to pay, an' de kind o' radio you gits. Say, big boy, run erlong now an' come back tomorrer 'bout noon fer dat gin. I won't have it till den."

"But you said——"

"Yes, I knows whut I done said. But I know now 'tain't possible ter have hit till tomorrer. You come back den, an' I will shorely have hit here fer you. Run erlong now; I has got ter go ter town directly to git some groceries. Come back tomorrer an' eat some more hot cat."

And with the gracious manner of a hostess ridding herself of a not unwelcome but for the nonce an embarrassing guest, she got Big'Un outside and waved a friendly hand at him from the gangplank when he looked back from the top of the levee.



BIG'UN returned to the *Maggie May* in double-quick time. He was dreaming a radio dream and wished to make it come true. If he could induce "Slim the Portygee," the cook and Joe, the cabin boy, to pool their finances and make it a mutual affair, the *Maggie May* would soon have a radio and the pleasure and entertainment that went with it.

He found a compliant crew and after counting all available funds, the three decided that after an advance payment of

current wages they optimistically anticipated wheedling from a reluctant mate, a hundred dollar outfit could be installed.

"But that ain't nothin' to the one we could git if we could find one o' them moonshine stills," Joe said, looking up from a New Orleans paper he was reading. "Here's where hit says:

"The Law an' Order League offers two hundred dollars reward for information leadin' to the arrest an' apprehension of any person operatin' a so-called moonshine still an'——"

"Aw, dem white folks is just stallin' an' throwin' de bull!" Big'Un interrupted; his mouth full of forecastle slum the cook had obligingly brought him. "I c'ud lead 'em to one sich a place I found today jest prowlin' eround. But when dem Federalized cops would git dere, nobody would be home, 'cause somebody'd put de bootleggers wise—maybe de waterfront cops demselves—an' all we'd git 'u'd be a horse laugh from de cops and a knife twixt our ribs some dark night frum de bootleggers. Dat sounds good, Joe, but crap shootin' is more sure an' less dangersom. I won two dollars today," and while describing his exploits in the lucky crap game, Big'Un forgot the reward offered by the Law and Order League.

But not for long; Joe saw to that. After Big'Un had finished his supper he went down in the engine-room to see how the repairs were coming along. Joe followed him.

"Say, Big'Un," he began wistfully, "won't you take me down on the waterfront and show me where that bootlegger's place is at? It's too early to turn in yet, an' besides you don't have to work hard tomorrer anyhow."

Big'Un did not require much urging and the two soon set out for the hot-cat boat.

Once clear of the *Maggie May*, however, the bright lights of Canal Street lured them away. A third-rate prize fight was attended and it was almost midnight before they finally turned into the narrow rambling old street that brought them out near the levee. After a good stiff walk of a mile, Big'Un pointed out the dim outlines of the hot-cat boat that showed up out of the foggy mist rising from the river. One window, in the back cabin, glowed a dim red.

Big'Un and Joe approached the boat cautiously with the air and movements of the great detectives they had seen demonstrated in the movies. Just opposite the boat they paused and Big'Un looked carefully about him, as much as the obscuring

mist would allow. Just beyond the hot-cat boat he made out the rotting hulk of an old canal-boat, partly awash.

"You go there an' hide, Joe," Big'Un pointed to the old canal-boat, "whilst I look eround a little." He took off his shoes and handed them to Joe.

Joe disappeared behind the defunct canal-boat, and Big'Un carefully crossed the gang-plank. He crept softly along the deck to the window of the cabin, which was covered by a closely-drawn curtain of a thick, reddish material. Big'Un flattened an already flat nose against the wire netting of the window and stared in. He could dimly make out the young woman who cooked the catfish, and three men, sitting around a small table, upon which was an oil lamp. The quartette were playing cards. Nothing suspicious about that.

He continued to look until something prodded him softly on the calf of his leg. His heart jumped in his mouth and he turned quickly to see Joe standing on shore in the dim moonlight with a long fishing-cane in his hand, with which he had prodded his leg. He was making frantic gestures. Big'Un joined him as quickly as he was able.

"Whut is it?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Motor-boat comin'. I can hear it but can't see it. Seems by the sound to be head-in' for this part of the levee. But you can't see nothin' fer the mist."

Both listened. The chug of the motor was quite plain.

"We'd better hide in dat old canal-boat until we see whut's goin' on," counseled Big'Un.

So they clambered up its oozy rotting side and jumped down in the moldy hold, the sound of their feet being followed by the frightened squeak of a rat as he scurried away.

The motor-boat chugged nearer, and as Big'Un and Joe peeped out of a jagged hole in the canal-boat's side, it shut off its power and gently drifted into view out of the mist, alongside of the hot-cat boat. A deck-hand reached out with a hook and caught the deck.

"Hey, you birds! Lend a hand with a rope!" some one called forward. There was a wild scramble inside and all four came out.

There was a few minutes low conversation and one of the hot-cat boatmen jumped ashore and looked up and down the levee. Then he came back and the motor-boat

crew began to unload a dozen or so boxes on the hot-cat boat deck, taking others on in return, which seemed to be empty by the way they were handled. As fast as the loaded ones were placed on the hot-cat boat, the three men and the young woman carried them inside the cabin.

"Well, we'll see you ag'in some time," called a voice from the motor-boat as it cast off and got under way.

"Better come back an' git some coffee," the young woman called hospitably.

"Naw, git it next time."

"All right, I'll have you some; come Saturday night, when you gits here—that'll be fine! Goodby!" and the motor-boat chugged away up the river.

Just as soon as he deemed it safe, Big'Un climbed out of the canal-boat, waded out in the water and drew himself up on the deck of the hot-cat boat. The curtain over the off-shore window to the cabin wasn't so thick and he could see and hear more plainly what was going on within. The three men were storing the boxes in a hold beneath the cabin, which was reached by a cleverly concealed trap-door. The woman was busy packing quart bottles into three suit-cases, from one of the boxes that had been opened.

"Say, Jim, you orter seen dat big nigger dat wuz here today when he was listenin' to de rev'rund's sermon on de radio. He must be a reg'lar country, backwoods nigger. He was plumb mystified. He would 'er drapped down dead if he had knowed dat sermon was broadcastin' de news of dis here gin comin' down de river. I mus' save dat big boy a bottle. He'll be here atter hit today. Maybe he'd be a good han' to bootleg fer us down amongst dem ships."

"Liza, you let dat strange nigger alone," the negro addressed as Jim answered savagely. "You is so blamed flirtatious you jest can't keep erway frum a strange man. Sell him de gin an' let him go. Don't pay him no mo' mind! You leave us to 'tend to peddlin' de booze an' you set right here at home where you belongs, an' fry hot-cat fer de river-hands. Does you gits me?"

"Oh yes, I gits you," Liza answered sullenly. "But you needn't have no fit erbout whut I said. I ain't no ways skeered uv you, nigger, an' hit 'twarn't no harm ter pass de time o' day wid a free-spending' colored man, like I done wid dat big boy. Here! Take dis gin now an' be on your way. Hit will be plumb daylight 'fore you an' Mose

gits to de Algiers side uv de river, an' Lucius he has a long ways to go, too."

Big'Un dropped softly off the boat's side into the water and held on until he heard the men depart. Then he waded back to Joe. Already in his mind's eye was the vision of a De Luxe Radio set purchased with the two hundred dollars reward plus the hundred already in hand.

"Joe," he whispered hoarsely through the hole in the canal-boat, his voice trembling with excitement. "Come on, boy, let's go home. I has done seen and heard enough to land four bootleggers safe and sound. Tomorrow we'll git dem Federalized cops an' come out here an' pinch 'em all. Don't you say nothin' to Slim an' Cookie till we gits de money. We'll surprize dem wid a shore 'nough radio dat you kin hear dem niggers way down in Africa singing, 'Preacher Lay dat Bible Down.'"

The next morning as soon as Big'Un and Joe could sneak past the mate's watchful eye they hunted up the prohibition enforcement officers and told their story:

"An' now, please suh," concluded Big'Un, "if en we leads you to dis here hot-cat boat dat has got hits guts full o' booze, does we git de two hundred dollars reward?"

"You see, suh," added Joe, "we want to get a radio set an'——"

"So that's why you two come here to spill the beans! Ain't it so?" the enforcement squad officer who had been listening to their story with a blasé air asked cynically. "Well, what you boys have told me is all old stuff. We know all about the hot-cat boat and what they have stored there. But we don't know where they make the moonshine. That's why we haven't pinched 'em. Been waiting and hoping we would find out where they make it. We want to make the raid clean and complete when we do shut down on 'em. Now if you boys can locate where it's made—well, I'll see that you get three hundred instead of two hundred."

"Honest, does you mean dat Cap'n?" Big'Un asked anxiously.

"I surely do! And I'll give you two ten days to do it in. Keep all hands off for ten days. Now, go to it!"

"'Scuse me, boss, but I wants ter git this here thing straight. You ain't foolin' is you? You means dat we, me an' Joe here, kin have ten days by ourselves to find out where dis moonshine j'int is; de place where

dey makes de booze, an' if en we does, we gits de three hundred dollars?"

The Federal Enforcement Agent looked sharply at Big'Un, an appraising, estimating glance. He had been merely bluffing, having a little fun with the amateur detectives, the strangest pair he had ever seen, but now he hesitated. Big'Un looked so earnest, and Joe too—his very freckles radiated earnestness of purpose—that the Federal Agent became serious:

"Well boys, I'll say this: I don't believe any one will find that white-mule factory any time soon. We know it's somewhere up the river, and that's all, so far. We have let the hot-cat woman alone because we have been using her as bait. So, as I have said, you didn't bring us any news. But what we do want and want bad, is to locate that still. Now, if you two think you have got the goods on these gents, go to it. I'll promise to let the hot-cat boat alone for ten days. If you beat us to the still the three hundred is yours. In other words if you can locate it and lead us to it, the reward is yours. Ain't that fair? But I must say that nearly everybody in this district from the Boy Scouts to the W. C. T. U.'s are out hunting for that still. And as they have about a thousand miles of canebrake and swamp on both sides of the river to hunt in, the hunting's good. So why discourage you boys? The more the merrier!"

Big'Un and Joe marched out and down into the street without uttering a word. Joe had nothing to offer and Big'Un's face wore an expression of such profound wisdom Joe did not like to interrupt his train of thought with questions.

They continued down the street until they reached a radio supply shop. They looked over several outfits, finally buying a hundred dollar outfit, upon which Big'Un paid a deposit of twenty dollars, the rest to be paid on delivery that afternoon, with the privilege of exchanging to a more expensive outfit in ten days.

Again on the street Big'Un said:

"Now, Joe, you git on back to de Maggie May an' collect up de rest of de radio money frum Slim an' Cookie. An' if en you kin git Mr. Shannon an' Mr. McComb to help out any, do so. I is goin' back to de hot-cat boat to git dat gin dat woman promised me an' see whut we kin do towards gittin' dat three hundred dollars reward. Now



Joe, mum's the word! Ifen we gits dat money—oh boy! Ifen we don't we don't want nobody givin' us de razz, does we?"



BIG'UN went on toward the levee where the hot-cat boat was moored. On the way he stopped in a second-hand clothing store presided over by an evil-faced "Cajun." Here he bought a U. S. Navy seaman's uniform for which the proprietor told him with tears in his eyes he was obliged to charge three dollars as worn and moth-eaten as it was; because Leavenworth yawned for him if the Government should find out he had sold it to any less personage than the Secretary of the Navy.

Big'Un reached the hot-cat boat in due course and found the same plump, smiling cook lady as before. He ordered another "complete" and ate it leisurely while waiting for two other customers who were fast exceeding their alcoholic tonnage, to make up their minds to depart.

Liza showed plainly by her manner that she had been expecting him, and was also glad to see him. After the other customers had gone, she went into the rear cabin and returned with a paper shoe-box which she opened and showed Big'Un the promised bottle of gin inside.

"Dis here bottle of joy water is three dollars to you, big boy, but ifen you wants to sell hit to some drummer or sugarland man, you kin git four—five—maybe six dollars fer hit. An' den if you wants mo' hits here fer you."

Big'Un put down his busy knife and fork, tiptoed to the shore door and looked out. Then with an air of mystery he repeated the maneuver for the adjoining cabin. Satisfied there was no one in earshot but Liza and himself he resumed his seat and beckoned for her to approach.

"Whut is it, big boy?" she asked, coming nearer with a slightly anxious expression on her face.

"Honey," answered Big'Un, still holding his air of deep mystery. "Does you know who I is?"

"All I knows is whut you done tole me. You said you wuz——"

"But I ain't dat!" Big'Un interrupted. "Lissen, an' you'll hear de news. I is Big Tom, de colored super-dreadnaught of de navy. Dat's who I is! An' I has done deserted offen de battleship *Ioway*, an' I has got

ter git hid somewheres 'till dem navy cops lets up on chasin' me. An' ifen you kin hide me, honey—why den when I kin come out o' hidin', I'll sell dis here boat load o' booze fer you—do it any day! I knows every nigger dat totes a cotton-hook or dat shovels coal, dat hits de port o' New Or-leans.

"But de fust thing to do, honey, is to take dis here uniform o' mine, and stick hit in de stove an' burn hit plumb up!" He handed her the package he had brought with him. "Den I'll feel safe, an' not befo'."

In a few minutes Big'Un saw his recent three dollar purchase go up in smoke. But even at that he considered it a good investment when Liza turned from poking the ashes of the burned uniform and said:

"Now den, big boy, dat's done! You set down an' rest yourself. Ifen you sticks to me, I sticks to you!"

"Lady, dat's whut I likes to hear," answered the delighted Big'Un. "But where kin I hide fer a few weeks? I kin work; I don't mind to work—'tain't dat, an' I has got a little money. But whut I craves, honey, is to git hid, to be vanished away till dem navy cops gits discouraged."

Liza had already mapped out in her mind what she would do. But she was a much wiser woman than her ready smile, vacant laugh and easy-going ways would indicate. She intended for Big'Un to pay full price for his safety:

"I can't hide you nowhere today, big boy, but let's see—this is Thursday. But come Friday ifen you wants to leave town fer a few weeks, an' wants to work whilst you is gone; come back here Friday night. If nothin' happens to me or you befo' den I kin git you away frum here. Is you honest a good fireman on a boat?"

"Lady," answered Big'Un modestly, "leave dat to me. De cap'n say I kin git more steam outer de *Maggie*—outen de *Magnolia* dan de ole Boy gits outen de front ovens o' Purgatory."

"How 'bout motor-boats?" Liza inquired.

"I is familiarous wid dem too."

"Well, anyhow you come tomorrer night 'bout nine. Ifen you kin keep 'way from de cops 'till den——"

"Lady, dey will have ter look long an' anxious! Where does I go?"

"Up de river somewheres; you leave dat to me."

Big'Un paid his score and departed,

reaching the *Maggie May* just as the radio receiving set was being installed.

"You can put it in the for'kusal," the mate conceded grudgingly. "But I can't say whut the old man'll do about it when he gits back from Texas. But go ahead; an' string them overheads or whatever you call them outside wires so they won't be in the way. Maybe this here machine will help to keep some of you awake some of the time except when you are eatin'."

The demonstrator from the radio shop, assisted by willing hands, soon had the set installed. Then he showed the crew how to "listen in" and get the usual familiar local stations and tactfully departed before the discussion had become heated as to who should be the first to listen in, and how long any two members of the crew should be allowed the use of the ear-pieces.

Big'Un did not get the opportunity to speak to Joe until the next morning. Then he beckoned to him mysteriously and they lodged behind some cotton bales on the wharf to talk.

"Joe, listen good now, 'fore some one comes. Tonight I wants you to meet me, just befo' nine o'clock on de fur side of de hot-cat boat, just where we wuz before, dat's all! You meets me but don't say nothin' to nobody. Now let's go on back an' tackle dat engin'-room. Ifen we gits all de machinery cleaned up good de mate will let us bofe go. Watch your step now an' don't cross him in nothin' an' git in bad so you can't go. You mus' shorely meet me tonight."

The two amateur Pinkertons returned to the *Maggie May* and worked all afternoon with such sustained energy and determination that the mate felt constrained to make sarcastic remarks as to their probable state of health and lessening chances for longevity, expressing his belief that they must undoubtedly be suffering from a mysterious malady that kills its victims by exhaustion from overwork.

During the noon hour, while the rest of the crew adjourned to the wharf to smoke their pipes, Big'Un and Joe "listened in," Joe amusing himself by trying to get the stations the demonstrator had assured him were easily available. But a lecture on Darwinism did not interest them and they failed to become absorbed in "The Care of the Very Young Child," from another station.

"Shucks!" exclaimed Joe petulantly. "We can't get no kick out o' this thing this time o' day! Tonight Slim and Cookie will get all the gravy while we are on shore. Why can't——"

With a grunt Big'Un caught Joe's hand: "Don't change none now Joe! Lissen!"

Into Big'Un's ears was coming the voice he had heard over the hot-cat's radio.

"Today bruddern an' sistern we takes as our text, 'Blessed be de feet of Him who cometh bringin' Tidings of Great Joy.' Does de prophet say, dearly beloved, when de tidings is to be brung? No! Does he say blessed is de feet of him who comes at nine in de mawnin' or ten at night? Does he say you can't have dem tidings only at nine P. M. in de evenin'? No! He say any old time a-tall jus' so de glad tidings is brung. Dat's all. So ifen you all is lookin' fer dem tidings accordin' to de Scripture, you mus' take 'em when dey comes. Don't say, 'Gospil man, don't come eround till nine A. M. I ain't had breakfus' till den. Or don't come befo' nine P. M. in de evenin', Gospil man, 'cause I ain't got de supper dishes washed befo' den. So please suh, come atter nine.' No! You mus' be ready an' waitin', any ole time. For don't de Good Book say——"

Big'Un took the receivers off his ears.

"Joe, shut dat thing off so dat bird can't hear——"

"Oh, he can't hear us!" Joe explained. "This is just a receivin' set!"

"Nebb' mind, he mought hear! Now! Dat's hit! Now lissen! Dat's de same rev'rund dat I lissened to down at de hot-cat boat. Somehow he makes dates in dem talks o' his'n to bring down dat moonshine. Well, let's us git back to work, otherwise de mate won't be in no good spirits when I tries to stand him off fer ten days leave tonight. De engineer says dis ole tub won't be ready to sail 'fore de twentieth an' dat's over two weeks off. I had orter git ten days leave easy ifen de mate's biler ain't foamin'. So let's go back an' work hard so as to keep him in good spirits."

That evening just before nine, Big'Un and Joe met in the mist rising from the river, just opposite the hot-cat boat and dodged unseen, behind the old canal hulk to talk:

"Now, Joe, you git inside dis canal-boat and watch. Watch till you see whut becomes uv me. To my thinkin' I is goin'

up de river on dat motor-boat whut we saw here before. Dat woman says she will have me a job tonight, somewheres outside of New Orleans, an' I figgers dat motor-boat'll tote me to dat job, an' oh boy! Supposin' I gits to see rite where dat booze is made! Think o' dat!"

"Ain't you skeered, Big'Un?" whispered Joe excitedly. "Ain't you worried none? Them there bootleggers all tote guns and knives. They don't think nothin' a-tall 'bout killin' a man."

"Dey ain't goin' ter kill me," Big'Un answered more bravely than he really felt. "'Cause I is goin' ter be a bootlegger my own self. You know whut dat Federalized cop said. He said: 'Mix an' mingle wid 'em. Be one uv 'em ifen it takes dat to find out all about 'em. Den ifen you gits pinched when de bootleggers does, we will turn you loose, 'cause we knows who you is.' So don't you worry none about me," he finished reassuringly as he started toward the hot-cat boat.

"What about me, Big'Un? What do I do?" Now that the great detective adventurer was about to begin Joe was nervous and uneasy.

Putting an affectionate hand about the size of a ham on Joe's shoulder Big'Un said:

"You set right down in de *Maggie May* an' wait till you hears from me. Work on dat radio box and git hit in good tune. Oh boy! When I gits back wid de bacon we will buy a new one dat you kin hear dem game roosters uv mine way off down dere in Galveston, crowin' fer day! Good-by, boy; you stay here till de motor-boat comes, an' watch out, an' you'll see me go."

As Big'Un had predicted, the motor-boat soon came in out of the mist, doused her lights, unloaded and lost no time in backing out into the river again. As she was heading up stream, Big'Un called out from the stern: "Good-by lady! Much obliged fer gittin' me de job!" Joe was sure this was for his benefit; to let him know the amateur still-hunter was on his way.



BIG'UN did not find the motor-boat crew overly sociable. The man addressed as "Cap'n" was an evil-browed mongrel Creole, known in Louisiana as a "Cajun," who swore at Big'Un in Creole patois for raising his voice in farewell. The man in charge of the motor was

a runty little water rat who could be any one of a half-dozen mixed breeds. The other two men were negroes like himself, who went below deck to the little cabin, lay down on mattresses on the floor, and went to sleep.

As no one volunteered any information as to the work he was expected to do, or as to their destination, Big'Un philosophically followed the example of the two members of his race and went to sleep beside them. When he awoke the rising sun was touching the gray bosom of the broad river with reddish gold, and when he went up on deck he saw they were towing a medium-sized houseboat, dazzling in a new coat of white paint, with gold trimming and with a huge sign fastened upright across her roof, whose large gold letters bore the legend:

## GOSPEL BOAT—GLAD TIDINGS

And beneath this in smaller letters:

**SEEK YE THE LORD WHILE HE MAY  
BE FOUND. CALL UPON HIM  
WHILE HE IS NEAR.**

Big'Un viewed all this with open mouth. He had seen "Opera Boats" and "Show Boats," but never a Gospel Boat before, although he had heard of them. Seeing his air of mystification one of the colored crew volunteered this information:

"Dat's our boat we is towin' an' dat's where your job is."

"Huh! I ain't no preacher!" Big'Un snorted. And the deckhand laughed:

"Dey ain't all preachers on dat boat. De rev'rund has de easy job, an' don't need no help. Whut he wants you fer is a roustabout, or to run de motor on dis boat, or maybe fire de bilers on de tug-boat he means to buy next time we goes to Memphis."

With this news Big'Un had to content himself until the motor-boat drew up to a landing and pulled in its tow-line. The crew went aboard the houseboat for breakfast as soon as they had tied up to the landing and made everything shipshape. The captain of the motor-boat beckoned for Big'Un to follow and preceded him on board the *Glad Tidings*. He hunted up the mate, who in language not current in the best gospel circles, was superintending the gangplank.



"Here's a man dat wants a job," the motor-boat skipper explained and disappeared in the direction of breakfast. The mate turned and glared at Big'Un.

"What can you do, boy?"

"I kin fire bilers, oil engines—roustabout gineraly."

"Do you reckon you could manage a small tug-boat? Keep her engine goin' an' fire her too?"

"Shorely could, an' I kin run a motor-boat, too."

"Where'd you work last?"

Big'Un glanced about him uneasily. There was no one near.

"I—I worked for de U. S. Navy."

A knowing look came over the mate's fat and hairy face.

"Gee! Well, I think I c'n use you at—at about two bucks a day, an' all you kin eat. Do you drink—fight booze?"

"Not much in gineral."

"All right! All you kin drink too, then, I guess. Kin you keep your mouth shet?"

"Yes, suh!" replied Big'Un fervently. "Dat's de best thing I does."

"Good! Go tell the cook I said give you your breakfast, then come on back here to me. I'll put you to work."

Big'Un found the cook to be one of his own race and as cooks sometimes are, grouchy and uncommunicative. But he warmed up when Big'Un told him he was from New Orleans.

"Dat's my home. I used to live in a shack 'way back down on de levee. I shorely would like to git back dere," he concluded with a homesick sigh, setting the coffee pot in reach of his guest. "I shorely is good an' tired lookin' at de canebrakes an' swamps 'long de river an' hearin' dese here blue-gum swamp niggers prayin' an' hollerin' 'bout dere sins bein' washed erway."

"Dey say jobs is plentiful; why don't you go on back home, cookie?" asked Big'Un sympathetically.

"Can't!" the cook replied briefly.

"Dat's me! I can't neither," Big'Un continued confidently. "I got tangled up wid de navy."

The cook's eyes bulged.

"Did you, big boy?" but he did not reciprocate with the details of his own exile from the Crescent city. But he did volunteer the helpful information that:

"De mate's a good boss when he ain't

boozin', but de trouble is he boozes nigh all de time."

"Where does he git de booze?" Big'Un asked in a casual way, but he held his breath for the reply.

"Well, you wait an' see," answered the cook.

And with this answer, Big'Un had to be content. The cook retired to his kitchen, and lifted his voice in a doleful song as he began to wash the dishes.

The mate had disappeared when Big'Un returned to the deck, so he utilized the time to investigate the houseboat. He found that the large forward cabin of the *Glad Tidings* could easily be converted into a fair-sized meeting-house by using the hundred or more deck-chairs, now piled in one corner. In one end was a movable pulpit, a cottage organ, a movie apparatus, and a large radio outfit. Distributed about the walls of the cabin were appropriate framed mottoes and quotations from the Bible.

"Dis here Gospel boat is like de old nigger's coon trap," a voice explained behind him. "Hit gits 'em a comin' an' a gwine. Ifen dey don't want to be preached to we shows 'em de movies, an' ifen dey tired a lookin' at 'em we turns on de radio."

Big'Un turned to find an old negro standing behind him, of the typical plantation type; bow-legged, lazy-looking, bald-headed and good-humored, but for all of that shrewd and with an easy-going conscience.

"An' den," the old man continued, "ifen dey gits tired o' all dat we gives 'em —"

The old man checked himself abruptly, turned hastily and resumed his mopping of the polished floor.

"Says which?" Big'Un asked ingratiatingly.

"Nothin'," the old man answered shortly, mopping vigorously. And then, as if ashamed of his abrupt reply, he added, "Well, we does dance, sometimes, on dis nice floor." Then he edged over closer to Big'Un. "Say, big boy, whut you done down de river?" and the old man revealed the fact that he was a "blue-gum" by a broad grin.

"Who, me?" asked Big'Un, with an air of innocence.

"Yes, you! Whut you done dat fotched you up here on dis here boat, away frum

New Orleans or Baton Rouge or any ole place down de river where you lives? You knows whut I means," the old man concluded testily. "You needn't tell me you don't ketch my drif'. Hit's common talk dat all de men who works on dis here boat has done somethin' to sic' de cops on 'em, or de high sheriff is huntin' fer 'em. I don't mind sayin' dat de gran' jury in my parish said I had too many wives fer an ole man. Now come clean an' tell me whut yours is!"

Big'Un hesitated discreetly, then came closer and muttered in the old man's ear.

"I got in trouble wid de navy—on one uv de battleships."

The old man clucked sympathetically in his throat and nodded understandingly.

"Yes, I know how 'tis, honey. I had a boy on one o' dem iron boats. Well, dis here Gospel Boat is a good place to work ifen you keeps your mouf shet an' tends to your own business."

"Tell me, how does dis Gospel business work? Whut does de rev'rund do?" inquired Big'Un, finding the old man the most loquacious of any of the crew he had met.

"Well, suh, dey used to git dis Gospel Boat towed up along de river, but now dey tows hit wid dis motor-boat dey found or bought somewheres. Dey goes on till dey reaches a town landin' or a plantation landin' same as dis one we is tied up at now. An' de rev'rund he goes up to de plantation an' spreads de news about the Gospel Boat bein' down to de landin', an' he asks de colored folks to all come to meetin'. An' most in ginerol dey does. An' den de rev'rund gits in wid de local preachers an' elders an' singers, an' dey starts a revival meetin'.

"Sometimes dey has a real excitin' time, shoutin', singin' an' rampin' 'round like dey does at de camp meetin's, an' den sometimes dey don't do so well. Hit all depends on de time o' year an' if de cotton sold good. Ifen de folks make big money dey don't mine to divide up wid de preachers. But if dey don't git much fer der cotton dey holds on to de dollars till de eagle squalls.

"But de rev'rund he don't depend altogether on his preachin'. Dis here boat has got movies and de rev'rund shows dem fer two bits a head. Den too he sells jewelry, an' sometimes he runs a raffle—raffles off a ham, or a side o' bacon, sack o' flour; somethin' like dat. Den too he carries freight

once in awhile when he can git it. He 'lows to git a bigger boat dis fall. We has done fine de las' few months since de Rev'rund Odom took on dat white man, Mr. Jake Berger, who we calls de mate, as a partner. Money is plumb plentiful now. You see he——"

The old man stopped talking with a jerk and began to mop furiously.

"Go on now, big boy," he said querulously. "Git to work and leave me do mine: 'Tain't no use talkin' all day. Why don't you go on shore an' up to de town wid de rest o' de crew?"

Thus admonished, Big'Un left the old man to his mopping and wandered aimlessly about the boat. A Gospel houseboat was not a fruit steamer and Big'Un felt out of place and ill at ease. Then too, he seemed no nearer the solution of the moonshine mystery than he had been on the hot-cat boat in New Orleans. The small crew had proved to be suspicious and sullen. No information had been obtained from them. The motor-boat and its crew had vanished he knew not where. All that he really knew was that he was somewhere up the Mississippi, on the Gospel Boat—*Glad Tidings*; the rest was mystery. The three hundred dollars seemed farther away than ever. Maybe the hot-cat woman had played a joke on him, or growing suspicious of him, had "railroaded" him up the river to get rid of him. For surely a Gospel Boat, functioning as such, was the last place to look for bootleggers. And yet there was an air of mystery.

Big'Un shook his head and gave it up. He was not used to thinking along detective lines, or along any line for that matter, and it made his head ache. Then, with the philosophy of his race he said to himself.

"Well, I'se got nine mo' days to loaf around in. I mout as well be up here seein' an' hearin' things I ain't seen or heard befo', as to be down in New Or-leens trompin' up an' down de levee. I wonder when de rest uv dis here boat's crew is comin' back frum town? I is gettin' hongry."



BIG'UN'S musings came to an abrupt end when he saw a mixed procession of men, women and children emerging from the shore timber and approaching the boat. In front,

leading, was a portly form clad in a clerical Prince Albert coat which reached to his knees, a high hat, of the kind known in the south as "stove-pipe," and although it was mid-summer weather in a land where summer is summer, spotless cream-colored spats did their best to conceal the mighty feet clad in patent leather shoes.

Big'Un looked on as the rev'rund led the way on board the *Glad Tidings* and into the main cabin. Here he ascended the pulpit and waved his hand for the crowd to be seated.

He looked about him with a smug smile, and in a rich oily sonorous voice, that must have been worth a thousand a year to him, addressed the crowd:

"Dearly be-luv-ed, we will begin our services by jining wid de choir in singin', 'When He Calls dat Pilgrim Home.' Sister Alvirey, will you preside at de organ?"

"Hold on, Rev'rund Odum!" This admonition came from a short bow-legged clerically-clad member, who stood up as he spoke. "You ain't set de radio yet."

The Rev'rund Odum held up a restraining hand to Sister Alvirey, whose fingers were already on the organ keys.

"Dat's right, Brother Blakey! Thankee! You see folks, Brother Blakey is always on de job to remind me when I fergits. An' so fur he ain't never forgot to remind me when it's time to eat, or to take up de collection."

A general laugh followed this pleasantry, and while the rev'rund turned his radio phone to adjust the microphone at the side of the pulpit, Big'Un slipped into a rear seat.

"Now, den," resumed the Rev'rund Odum. "We is all set. De choir, assisted by de congregation, will please sing, 'When He Calls dat Pilgrim Home.'"

Big'Un got his spiritual uplift from his wife's regular attendance at church and his own annual contribution of twenty-five dollars to "de Pasture's salary." But he was strangely stirred by this old Puritan hymn, sung as only negroes can sing it, who are far removed from the great city churches, and are therefore free from any desire to ape the vocal efforts of the too efficient white choirs.

This congregation sang from their hearts with throats that had not lost their natural gift of melody, and under the spell of song, Big'Un's heart harked back to the camp-

meeting days of his boyhood, and a lump came in his throat.

However, the fiery eloquence of the burly pulpit orator produced no such an effect. From the time he announced:

"De text for today is from de first part of de eighteenth verse of de fifteenth chapter of Luke, which says, 'I will arise and go to my father,'" Big'Un became cynical. He noticed that he talked more to the microphone than to his congegation, which convinced him that the sermon had other uses besides the spiritual uplift of the plantation laborers. And when the rev'rund reached his, "and lastly be-luv-ed," he was devoting his attention almost entirely to the radio.

"An be-luv-ed, did de prodigal son say, 'I'll go to my father's house tomorrer or next day, when de Memphis boat comes in at nine?' Did he say, 'I'll ketch de Sunshine Special when she comes rarin' an rampin' into de deepo, wid de big engine pantin', de bell ringin', de whistle blowin' an' de conductor man hollerin' 'All a-board!' No, not him! Not dat boy! When he took a realize to hisself an' figgered out whut a fool he had done been, he ris' right up an' said, 'Good-by, niggers, I is done gone! Good-by, crap shooters; good-by, race hawses; good-by, yaller gals; I is goin' home to muh Paw's house!' An' he went, right den. No nine A. M., no five P. M., no one o'clock in de mawnin' fer him. Dat boy pulled his freight when de spirit moved him, an' he went home whilst de goin' wuz good."

After the meeting had broken up, Big'Un was summoned to the rev'rund's cabin, a small one in the rear of the large cabin used for the church services. He was conducted there by the elderly deck-hand with the superfluity of wives, who introduced him as "Dat new deck hand frum New Orleans."

The rev'rund was seated in a big Morris chair, which he completely filled, eating ham sandwiches and drinking coffee.

"De mate tells me he hired you into our crew dis mornin', brother," he began by way of preface, "an' whilst de mate runs de boat an' I looks out fer de preachin' I is still a kin' of general overseer. Dey tells me you comes frum New Or-leens. Is dat so?"

"Dat's so, Rev'rund," Big'Un answered, overawed by the dignity and "the cloth" of his questioner.



"Ain't jobs plentiful at dis season of de year in New Orleans?" the rev'rund asked pointedly. "An' how come you is up river lookin' fer a job ifen you is a water-front man?"

Big'Un came nearer.

"I has done got in bad wid de navy," he whispered hoarsely.

"Oh, you has?" The rev'rund was regarding him with a dubious eye.

"Yes, an' whilst I was scoutin' eround tryin' to git outer town I happened into de hot-cat boat up de levee an' Liza, de woman who runs de hot-cat boat, she is my friend, an' she sent me up here to git a job till de Marine cops leaves off huntin' fer me."

"Who was you in de navy? I knows you ain't got de same name now dat you had den, ifen you left befo' dey kissed you good-by. But who was you 'fore you left 'em?"

"Dey called me Big Tom, de Super Dreadnaught Slugger of de Navy," announced Big'Un modestly.

Silence fell upon the rev'rund's cabin like an oppressive pall. Big'Un glanced at the other man furtively. The heavy, square face, with its thick, loose greasy lips, had gone perfectly blank, the dull, yellowish-tinted bloodshot eyes stared at him, unseeing.

Big'Un could hear a congregation of blue-jays quarreling and swearing at each other among the trees on the bank of the river and the droning whistle of a far away down-river boat.

Just about the time Big'Un had decided he would explode if the other did not speak, there came a hoarse whispering growl from the Morris chair.

"Nigger, you is de biggest liar dat ever wore shoes. I is Big Tom my own self! Has dem Marine cops sent you up here to take me, 'cause you is big an' strong, same as I is? Nigger, repair to meet thy God! I ain't—" Big'Un was looking at the ugly snout of a heavy service automatic—"I ain't to be took alive, not by no one nigger! Even if he is big as I is."

Big'Un's brain whirled and his mind became a blank; paralyzed by the unexpected, he stood stupidly staring with his mouth open. At last, however, his consciousness came up for air, and he essayed to laugh. It was intended to be an easy conciliatory laugh. But it was really a dry, cackling croak.

"Course I ain't Big Tom, Rev'rund! I was just a foolin'. I know'd you all de time. I has seen you fight mo' times dan one. I——"

"Boy, you just keeps on lyin'! You ain't never seen me fight. I always fit on board ship an' certain, shore, I ain't never seen you on nary one of de ships I has been on. You never heard tell of me till dem Marines found out where I wuz an' sent you up here to take me. But you ain't goin' back to tell de news," and the automatic came in view again, assuming, in Big'Un's eyes, about the same proportions as the coast-defense guns in the fort at Galveston.

Realizing, as his fear-benumbed faculties began again to function, that he must do something to clear himself or be murdered, and yet afraid to retract his original lie about his service in the navy he said:

"Rev'rund, it's de dyin' truth! I has deserted, an' don't want no more to do wid dem Marines dan you does, ifen you is Big Tom. I said I was Big Tom 'cause I didn't crave to say just who I was. Big Tom come in my mind 'cause everybody in de navy knows about him, an' I allus heard de news dat Big Tom was just about all right. An' I just said I was him in consequence. I didn't mean no harm. I come up here to git a job. Ifen you wants me I stays, ifen you don't want me, I kin go ashore whilst de plank is down."

The rev'rund regarded him steadily and watchfully. Suspicion did not leave his face, but he laid the automatic down, and Big'Un's heart resumed operations.

"All right, big boy, git on back outside an' keep your mouf shut. Ifen I hears about you sayin' anything—an' reck-o-member I hears all dat goes on—on dis boat an' up an' down de river as fur as I wants to hear, 'cause I has got de best radio dere is. Ifen I hears of you sayin' airy nother thing about Big Tom or de navy—why you will go offen dis boat feet fust, an' lyin' down wid dem big hands o' yourn crossed on your bosum, an' 'bout five pounds o' lead in your insides. So watch your step!"

"Yes suh, rev'rund, I aims to do just dat," agreed Big'Un heartily, as with a mighty sigh of relief, he turned and almost staggered from the cabin.

Once outside and safe in the very stern of the *Glad Tidings* as far away from the

rev'rund's presence as he could get, a deep gloom took the place of the plain scare from which he had been suffering.

"Dat's whut comes frum lyin'. De-teck-tive! I looks like one, don't I!" Big'Un muttered scornfully to himself. "I believe dis here is a bootleggin' boat, instead of a Gospel Boat whut hit claims to be. I knows in reason dat hit is. But I has a fat chance to prove it! 'Fore I gits started, I has already done run into de undertaker. Now is de time I goes into dry dock on dis here de-teck-tive business. From now on I works, an' keeps my mouf shut excusin' de time I is eatin' till I sights some boat goin' down de river. Den I goes back to de *Maggie May*, an' when I gits back to dem bilers, I stays right dere till death come to my relief, or I gits fired. Three hundred dollars won't do no dead man any good, an' dat's whut I'll be ifen I fools wid dat bootleggin' parson."

And having worked out his course, Big'Un went to supper, and soon afterwards to bed.

 HE WOKE at daybreak to find the motor-boat had returned and was towing the *Glad Tidings* slowly upstream, tying up about nine o'clock at a small landing opposite a dense canebrake. Just above the landing a broad, sluggish creek mingled its muddy waters with the muddier waters of the great river. And great trees bent over the landing in such a way as to completely conceal the *Glad Tidings* from any but very near-by river traffic.

A narrow path led a winding way out into the dark, green jungle of the tall cane, and with the exception of the distant cawing of crows there was no sound of life to disturb the rippling rush of the river.

Big'Un came out on deck and looked around. There was nothing to see but the cane and the creek, even the river was partly shut off by the overhanging branches of the trees. The two sullen non-committal deckhands were making the boat fast, as if the tying up of a Gospel houseboat to a landing in the desert waste of a Mississippi River canebrake was an everyday affair.

In the meantime the Cajun captain of the motor-boat came on board the *Glad Tidings* and went into the rev'rund's cabin. When he came out he called to Big'Un—

"Want to go up the creek, big boy, an' see what you can see?"

Big'Un could not think of anything up that muddy creek he would like to see, but he thought it expedient to be agreeable.

"Yes, I shorely does ifen de rev'rund an' de mate is agreeable."

"It's all right; I've done asked 'em. 'Sides dat dey ties up here for two or three days."

Thus assured Big'Un climbed over into the motor-boat which after a wheezy snort and a preliminary pop or two got under way. The banks of the creek were lined with cane and overhanging trees, and its course twisted and turned in and out, losing itself completely in the canebrake, and with the creek went Big'Un's sense of direction. The motor-boat followed the meanderings of the creek for an hour's steady going, the canebrake becoming more and more dense and wild as they proceeded. At last they reached the place where the creek widened out into a pool. Here they tied up at the roots of a great tree.

"Now den, big boy, us is goin' to hunt squirrels; maybe shoot a wild turkey ifen we kin call one up. Want to come erlong?"

Big'Un did not want to come, but pursuant with his policy of being agreeable, he clambered up the clayey bank with the others.

Then began a slow fight with the all but impenetrable cane. The ground beneath, which never felt the sun, was soft and the gumbo-like mud clung to shoe soles until soon Big'Un's none too modest feet had assumed the proportions of scows. The cane flapped across his face, twisted about his body, tied itself about his legs, making each step forward an earnest effort.

"Don't seem to me to be no good place for no squirrels," complained Big'Un after two hours of steady going which had resulted in a sum total of about two mirey miles into the canebrake. "Might be a good place fer bears or dem rhinoseruses like dey has got in de park, but dis ain't no place fer no squirrels."

"Boy, you is right," exclaimed the Cajun captain. "You stay here till I goes back to the boat and gits the ten gauge gun. Dis here sixteen ain't no good fur bears an' we'uns might run on one 'most any time."

"I'll go too 'an' git my other gun," said another member of the crew. "I'll go too," from the other.

"Me too," said Big'Un.

"No, big boy," said the Cajun captain, "you ain't got no gun to git—an' you stay here. We has done beat out this path an' we don't want to lose hit. You stay here, an' when we holler, you holler back so we can find de way easy. Set down an' rest yourself; we'll be back soon as we gits de guns."

"You all won't be right back lessen you all is a steam roller," prophesied Big'Un. "I'll be right here waitin' 'cause I is plumb tired out as it is, an' willin' to rest."

Big'Un waited and fought the mosquitoes valiantly until the sun reached the zenith, pouring its hot rays down on him. The heat and the mosquitoes together made him restless. He stood up, took a deep breath and broke the silence of the canebrake with a mighty yell. There was no answer. He yelled again; this time from far away an owl laughed at him.

He began to retrace his steps. Or thought he was, but the long interval had allowed the trampled-down cane to right itself, and after a sweaty hour Big'Un realized that all the cane around him looked alike; that there was no path, and he was lost.

To find one's self really lost, with no sense of direction, no idea of the locality or knowledge of country, engenders a feeling of terror and of desolation all out of proportion to the situation, no matter how desperate that may be. The circumstances call for a strong brave soul, and Big'Un did not possess one.

"Oh! You is gittin' just whut's comin' to you," he berated his inner self. "You a de-teck-tive—I'll say you is! But wait! Wait till I gits dese here two hands on dem niggers dat brung me up here. An' lost me! Done hit a purpose too! When I sees 'em, de undertaker gits a good job, ifen I lives to git outen here."

Lashing his soul with words while the cane lashed his body, Big'Un forged ahead, his anger and his hunger increasing with every weary, sweaty yard he made through the brake. He had not eaten since breakfast and then only a cup of coffee and a biscuit, and while the sun sank, his hunger rose.

Presently he heard a gun shoot, then another, to be followed by the agonized squealing of a pig. He stopped and listened. As he looked in the direction of the distant squeals he saw what appeared to be an opening in the cane. So with renewed hope to strengthen his weary steps, he battled on

to emerge at last upon a small clearing in the cane, surrounded by a rail fence, and beyond the clearing a great forest—"the piney woods" that marked the end of the canebrake at last.

In the center of the clearing stood a cabin built on stilts and with a small flat boat tied to one of the stilts. A wise provision against the day when the Father of Waters would take the notion to wander far afield.

About the cabin was a growing garden of corn and vegetables. A black sooty pine-knot smoke was issuing from the mud and moss chimney that stood against the house, and the odor of frying pork was wafted to Big'Un's eager nostrils. He halloed heartily, if a little thickly, due to a mouth that watered with expectancy.

At the sound two gaunt, deep-mouthed hounds rushed out and bayed him noisily, from a safe distance. Finally the cautious head of an old dried-up negro looked out of the cabin door. In his hand was a long frying fork. His face, wrinkled and wizened, was kindly if slightly suspicious. The two men looked at each other for a moment, and then the old man called to the dogs:

"Shut up, Rubus! Come here Rowdy! Ain't you all got no manners! Climb de fence an' come on in brother," he called hospitably to Big'Un. "Them dogs won't bite nothin' but somethin' to eat."

Thus advised Big'Un climbed the fence and approached the cabin; the old man eyeing him shrewdly as he came.

"Come in and rest yourself," he urged. "How come you found your way here? Did you come de big road all de way frum town, to git your fortune tole, maybe?"

The old man asked this politely, but he still had a suspicious look and he stood with his arm held across the door as if he would dispute the other's entrance until he knew his mission.

"No, can't say as I did," answered Big'Un cautiously; he was fast learning not to talk too much. "But I don't need no fortune teller to tell me I is hongry 'nough to eat a raw dog. An' I has got four bits here to pay fer a snack o' dat pork you is cookin' inside."

"Come on in!" the old man replied affably. "I just killed two uv de fattest shoats you ever seen. An' I 'lows to eat de spare ribs fer supper. Dat's whut I is cookin' now."

As Big'Un stepped up into the door he



saw hanging on the wall opposite a large gaudy gilt frame containing an engraved certificate. In the exact center of the certificate, under the figure of a knight on horseback, armed *cap-a-pie*, was the picture of the old man before him, and beneath the photograph large gilt letters proclaimed to the world of "Loyal and Esteemed Knights of the Silver Fleece and Leaf" that the holder of this certificate whose portrait shows above, "is a knight of the Mystic and Secret Inner Circle, and a Knight Commander of the King's Guard, and a Swordsman of the Sacred Seven; and is therefore entitled to all the rights and privileges and protections that brother Knights of the Silver Fleece and Leaf are commanded and pledged to show him."

The sight of this framed declaration of privileges raised Big'Un's barometer almost to a normal level. He stood reading it carefully while the old man hastened back to his cooking. Big'Un turned and regarded the back of his busy host almost with affection. He had reached a safe haven at last. For he was, as his wife despairingly classified him to sympathetic female listeners, a "jiner," and he was a charter member of the Frederick Douglas Chapter No. 62 of the Knights of the Silver Fleece and Leaf.

Big'Un cleared his throat unctuously.

"I takes hit, brother, frum dis here certificate dat you is a noble Knight."

The old man turned sharply at the words and regarded Big'Un inquiringly. Then he took his skillet of meat off the stove, and with the uttermost gravity, returned the mysterious sign Big'Un had made.

"I shorely is, brother, as you sees by de certificate. I is de Inner Guardeen, an' de Sword Toter fer Booker Washington Chapter 142 of No Gallus Prairie, de town 'bout ten miles frum here. Where did you jine?"

Big'Un enlightened him, and the two exchanged an intricate series of grips and pass words.

"Draw up a cheer, brother," the old man invited his now tested and proven fraternal friend. "No, not that cheer. Hit ain't so strong as hit mout be. Dat's right. Now den, help yourself bountiful to dese here spare ribs. You has already 'lowed you is hongry. After we eats we can talk more agreeable."

Big'Un did not wait to be politely urged. He fell to and ate the spare ribs he was asked to eat, and then topped it off with

"hoe cake," syrup and black coffee. It was only after all the spare ribs, hoe cakes and coffee had disappeared that either of them spoke. Then the old man said:

"Now brother, tell me 'bout yourself. You say you didn't come frum town—well, whar is you frum? Hit's ten mile to No Gallus, an' hits eight mile through de hardest kind uv canebrake twixt here an' de river. Ifen you did not come frum No Gallus you is bound to come frum de river. Dey ain't no wheres else you could come frum. But you has done got dis fur frum some place. Now where is you gwine frum here? Ifen it ain't no personal question."

"Brother, you is right," agreed Big'Un heartily. "You shorely has to ramp and rear to git through dat canebrake, 'cause dat's de way I come, excusin' part uv de way I come up de creek on a boat." Here the old man started and gave Big'Un a quick suspicious look, but the other was too busy recounting his woes to notice the start or the look. "An' brother——"

"Rasmus," interrupted the old man, "Call me Rasmus; dat's my name."

"All right, an' where I lives dey calls me Big'Un. You kin call me dat too," and then Big'Un went on with the tale of his misfortunes to conclude with: "An' Brother Rasmus, I just knows in my own mind dat dem niggers an' dat Cajun run off an' left me in dat canebrake on purpose. Dey wanted to lose me. An' dat boat—Brother Rasmus, dat ain't no honest Gospel Boat. No suh, it ain't. Between me an' you as Knights, an' I hereby and hereon obligates you as a Knight not to breathe a word o' this, but dat houseboat ain't no Gospel Boat. It's de biggest bootleggin' barge whut dey is. An' dat rev'rund whut hollers in dat radio all de time, he——"

Big'Un stopped suddenly. He had remembered the instructions he had received with the automatic to impress them on his mind. The less he said about the rev'rund the better, even with eight miles of canebrake between him and the river.

Occupied with this thought Big'Un did not notice how a malignant look of suspicion had changed Rasmus' pleasant wrinkled face. The look was gone as swiftly as it came and the old man cackled an evasive laugh:

"I ain't lost no bootleggers my own self, an' I ain't huntin' fer none."

"But I is, Brother Rasmus, an' ifen I

finds 'em hit means three hundred silver dollars to me."

Rasmus' soul had already been in a turmoil of unrest and suspicion. But these words decided him. His lodge brother must declare himself.

"Look here boy, who is you nohow? Is you one of dem colored de-teck-tives? I has heard tell dat dey is niggers low down enough to spy and eavesdrap on dere own color, but I ain't never seen one. Ifen you is one o' dem, you mus' make yourself scace about dis here house and pull your freight somewheres else, Knight or no Knight. Dere is always a place where friendship ceases, an' business begins, an' dis is one ov dem places. As I done tole you I ain't lost no bootleggers an' I ain't huntin' fer none."

Big'Un opened his mouth once or twice to speak but by a mighty effort of the will, managed to wait until Rasmus had finished.

"Brother Rasmus, I ain't no de-teck-tive. I is just a plain nigger like you is, dat works hard. Here! Look at de corns in dese here hands. Does de-teck-tives has dem? No! But lissen! An' remember you is obligated——"

He told him truthfully of his hunt for the moonshine still, from the beginning.

"Lissen Brother Rasmus," he concluded, "we ain't fur from it—I knows dat! I senses dat; dat's whut dey tied up to dat canebrake landin' fur. Dey ain't nobody in dat canebrake to preach to, excusin' de owls and the whipperwills. Dey tied up dere to ship on a load of booze! Dat's plain. Now where does dey make dat booze? Lissen, Rasmus; ifen you knows—ifen you can find out where de place is, an' shows hit to me—dat's all I ask— Why den me an' you shares an' shares a like on de reward."

During this eloquent discourse Rasmus had eyed Big'Un cannily, out of shrewd old eyes. Gradually, as Big'Un talked, the look of suspicion left his face, and now he was grinning impishly, apparently delighted with the prospect of sharing an adventure with the prospect of a reward to give it zest. But the old man was not to be bought easily or cheaply. He pretended to ponder long and deeply. Finally he went to a cupboard in the corner and took down a small hoop. Dangling from it was three dry bones of a fowl. Between each bone hung a tiny bag made of red flannel. At

the other side of the hoop a small horseshoe magnet was tied, with tufts of owl feathers on each side of it.

Big'Un regarded this portentous instrument with starting eyeballs.

"Man," he gurgled hoarsely, "whut you goner do wid dat con'jur hoop?"

"Didn't I tell you at fust dat I was a fortune teller an' a Hoodoo man? I makes most o' my money dat way. I is goin' to consult dis hoop an' see ifen hit's best fer me to go wid you or stay right to home, where I knows I is safe. Set over there Brother Big'Un, so I kin have a wide place to throw it in."

He held the hoop high above his head, shook it, shut his eyes and said:

"Must I stay, or must I roam?  
Answer me, old Gander Bones!  
If I stays, fall side by side;  
If I goes, fall fur an' wide!"

Then with a twirling movement he threw the hoop on the floor out in front of him. After a few gyrations the hoop settled down. The two men leaned forward, breathlessly, and regarded the bones. They had fallen "fur and wide."

The old man looked up from an earnest study of the bones, which had also included Big'Un, but Big'Un was too interested in the awesome "con'jur hoop" to notice the old man's scrutiny.

"Well, brother, old con'jur hoop says go!" Rasmus began briskly. "An' now dat's decided; take holt of de udder side o' dat hoop an' obligate yourself as a valiant knight an' true, of de Silver Fleece an' Leaf, dat whut I say an' does frum now on out you will keep shut up in your insides."

Big'Un took hold on the opposite side of the hoop from Rasmus with tremulous and gingerly fingers. With all his superstitious soul he feared that con'jur hoop, and believed in it too with all his heart, although to a white man he would have denied, with an evasive laugh, any knowledge of such an instrument.

"Now den," finished Rasmus pleasantly, after he had obligated him, "ifen you breaks your word you will die with de pellagry, or your innards will all rot or perish away."

"Can't I turn dis here hoop loose?" stammered Big'Un. "Hit's givin' me de cramps in muh stummick all ready."

When the hoop had been put away in the cupboard, Rasmus sat down, lighted his pipe and said:

"Brother Big'Un, now dat we is obligated, I don't mine tellin' you I think I knows just about where dis here bootleggin' is done. An' after de moon rises I'll take you over to de place, an' den you can see fer yourself. You set here in de house an' make yourself at home till I goes an' puts my fresh meat away. Ifen I leaves dem dead hawks hangin' out dere in de yard de swamp-wolves will tote 'em off 'fore daylight."

Rasmus disappeared outside in the darkness, leaving Big'Un sitting before the fire in the open fireplace, later to nod and sleep before the old man returned.



BIG'UN woke with an uneasy start, partly conscious of the fact that Rasmus had been gone a long time. He was sure of it when he went to the open door and saw that the great golden full moon had not only risen but was swinging well above the horizon of stately pines.

"Wonder where Brother Rasmus is?" Big'Un muttered to himself. "De moon has done riz an' we had orter been on our way long time ergo."

"Here I is!" a voice announced from within the cabin behind him.

At the uncanny and unexpected sound, Big'Un, with a grunt of fear, leaped from the door into the yard, and then turned to see Rasmus standing there shaking with his cackling laughter.

"Brother Big'Un, you shorely is easy skeered, to be a valiant Knight of de Silver Fleece and Leaf," he snickered. All the old man's suspicion had vanished. He was now in a congenial mood. "I come in de back door, easy like 'cause I lowed you might be asleep. An' den you says, 'Where is Brother Rasmus?' an' I says, 'Here I is!' Dat ain't no skeery word."

"Shucks! I warn't skeered!" declared Big'Un as he climbed back into the cabin. "I was just cautious. After you has knocked about de world like I has, Brother Rasmus, you will learn to jump first, ifen you hears a strange noise, an' look afterward. Ain't hit time to be goin'?"

"Shorely is! De moon is shinin' good now. An', Brother Big'Un, I think I has located in my mind de place dem bootleggers would likely be at. Anyhow hit would be a monstrous fine place to make moonshine and white mule. Leastways we'll go see it. I mout be wrong."

The old man led the way by a well-worn path through the cane to the creek. Here he turned aside and plunged through a tangled mass of vines and bamboo briars to where a small flat boat had been cleverly concealed in a small slough which flowed into the creek.

"Us goes in dis here boat up de creek two, three miles, den we has to hoof it de rest of de way," Rasmus explained as he sat down in the stern of the boat with a steering paddle in his hand, handing another to Big'Un to punt and paddle with.

The slow-flowing creek wound in and out of the great shadowy canebrake as if it too found the dense jungle hard going. At last they emerged into a comparatively open country which gradually became hilly. And the creek, a swift current now, was running between high clayey banks.

The old man pointed ahead, where the dim outlines of a gaunt gray old house could be seen dimly in the moonlight, among a grove of trees on a hill beside the creek.

"Hit was on dat bluff yonder," he explained in a low tone, "whar ole Colonel Edgewood had his plantation house, in slavery time, an' ifen I is right, hit's up dere in dat ole house, ha'nted some folks says, where de bootleggers makes de booze. Now we will go in under dis here shelvin' bank an' hide our boat. An' den we must wade out to de bank. It's de onliest way we kin make shore dat nobody won't steal our boat."

They ran under the overhanging bank that the action of the swift current had almost made into a cave. The old man produced an iron rod, sharp at one end and with a ring on the other. He thrust the sharp end into the clay bank and tied the boat to the ring.

"Now den! Be keerful when you wades out an' don't make no fuss," he cautioned. "One or two of dem moonshiners mout be prowlin' 'round here somewheres."

They reached the opposite bank of the creek without mishap and climbed to the top. They could see clearly then the half-ruined old mansion that stood, grim and ghostly gray, silent in the midst of its grove of elm and oak.

"Dat's de place," Rasmus whispered, clutching Big'Un's arm. "Hit used to be, in slavery time, a bodacious big plantation house. An' all 'round here as fur as you kin see was cotton an' corn, an' sugar cane



growin'. But de ole colonel he took to drinkin' an' gamblin' on dem Memphis an' New Or-leens boats till finally he got mixed up in a crooked card game or somethin'. Anyhow he got kilt an' dey brung him home an' buried him in de yard under dem big trees. An' his wife she went back home to her own folks, an' dey says de colonel 'walks'—anyhow folks thinks de house is ha'nted. So de place has all done gone to rack an' ruin. An' nobody ain't lived in hit for a long time. Dat's why de bootleggers took up here—I means," he corrected himself hastily, "dat's why *I thinks* dey has took up here. Hit's a long way off from other folks, an' lonesome an' ha'nted. So ifen dem bootleggers has choosen hit, dey has shorely choosen a good place to make moonshine.

"An' Brother Big'Un, you know what I hears dem bootleggers does? Well, lissen! Folks tells me dat dey has got two coffins—complete, man-size coffins I hears dey is; outside box, silver handles, an' 'Gone to Rest' on the inside kiver—all complete. You knows—everything just like dem Memphis undertakers furnish fer one of dem hundred dollar club funerals. An' lissen! Dey fills dem coffins plumb full of white mule, fastens hit up in de box, an' on de outside of de box dey puts one of dem health certificates all filled out. You know—dem burial license whut say, 'Dis is to certify dat de corpse herein ain't died wid no ketchin' sickness,' an' den dey takes dat coffin full of booze up de river or down to some town, an' de undertaker who is a bootlegger is at de landin' to take charge of de remains.

"Dey even has de widder at de landin' to weep an' moan over de remains! An' de undertaker takes de coffin up town to his parlor, an' bless de lord! 'Fore night everybody is happy an' de booze all gone. Come on now; less go see ifen dis is de place an' ifen dem bootleggers is to home."

Big'Un's hair had bristled on his neck and head as the goose-flesh of fear engendered of ghosts and coffins had crept up his spine. But all this was forgotten now in the prospective joy of spying out the moonshine factory; and the consequent three hundred dollar reward. So with Rasmus leading, he went forward eagerly.

The two crept toward the old mansion through waist-high jimpson weeds, wild blackberry vines, "beggar lice" and an old tumbled-down stone fence that in post-

bellum days had been a high wall about the old barn-like colonial house. Selecting a break in this wall, Rasmus stepped inside, softly separated the tangled vines of ivy and bamboo briar and peered in. Then he motioned for Big'Un to come forward and have a look. There was a faint flickering ruddy glow coming from the basement of the house which they had approached from the rear.

They crawled through a once tame, now wild, box-hedge and found the basement window to be set below the ground in a sort of walled-up well of brick, built in such a fashion as to allow the window to be opened, for the basement of the house had been dug out twenty feet below the surface of the ground.

Having reached the basement window, they found it begrimed and dim with the cobwebbed accumulation of years. They could faintly hear the mumble of voices within but could see nothing, so Rasmus softly scrambled down into the walled up well about the window; and Big'Un followed him.

They raised their heads cautiously until their eyes were on a level with the window sill. They could see inside fairly well in spite of the remains of a "rolled-up curtain" hanging over the window from within. Inside was a large basement or cellar, at one time a store room for the vegetables and meats for the master's table. Brick pillars supported the floor above, set at intervals from one end to the other of the basement. Near the center—and Big'Un's heart leaped in his mouth at the sight—was a large still worm on a brick oven. But the fire beneath it had been banked. Evidently "the run" was over for the day.

Lanterns hung from the rafters above, and sitting about a barrel under the light was the motor-boat crew, who had managed to lose Big'Un. With them was another mulatto, who, Big'Un judged, ran the still. In the midst of these, in the seat of honor, his chair made from another barrel, was the portly form of the rev'rund himself. And all of them were playing cards and drinking from tin cups. No doubt sampling the newly born white mule.

Big'Un pushed an inquisitive face nearer in an attempt to hear. For a time he could hear nothing distinctly, because a screech owl out in the brush began to call plaintively, to be answered by another on the

opposite side of the house. Big'Un shuddered as a cloud went over the moon and grabbed Rasmus by the arm.

"Brother Rasmus," he said in a husky shaky whisper, "just listen to dem ha'nt owls. How kin dem niggers set dere playin' cards, wid dem birds hollerin' outside an'—an' maybe dat ole colonel's ha'nt risin' outen de grave to walk!"

"Shucks, boy!" Rasmus whispered, shaking his head, "dat stuff in dem cups whut dey is guzzlin' down would make a rabbit spit in a lion's face—lissen!"

Big'Un thankfully noting that the owls were silent, pushed closer to the window pane.

"You had orter seen him," he heard one of the motor-boat brethren say. "Dat fool nigger frum New Or-leens just set right down in dat canebrake to wait an' I'll bet he's still settin' dere, waitin'."

"No, he ain't," another member of the crew contributed, "dat boy has done wore out dem big feet of his'n tryin' to find a way outen dat swamp, dat swamp ain't Canal Street, I'll tell de world. An' dat nigger never was out of New Or-leens befo' he took his trip. Haw! Haw! Rev'rund, dat was a good idear o' yourn—not to kill dat boy, but just to lose him an' let de moccasin snakes an' alligators do de res'! How does you like dis new joy water?"

"Fair, boy, fair," and the rev'rund, with a gulp, downed what was left in his cup. "Now den! Us better git packed up an' ready to go 'fore de moon gits down below de trees. 'Sides dat I aims to be fur down de river time de sun rises."

Then, according to the tale Rasmus had told him, Big'Un saw the motor-boat crew lug two casket boxes into the light, unscrew the lids and lift out the coffins within. These they proceeded to fill with "short quarts" of white mule, which were filled and standing about the still.

"Now den rev'rund, where is de 'stificates to tack on de outside of dese here wooden overcoats?"

The rev'rund again emptied his tin cup, before reaching in the pocket of his Prince Albert and producing two Board of Health permits for the transportation of dead bodies.

"De one dat says hit's de body of John Eliphaz Taliferro, tack hit on the box goin' to de Lomo plantation landin', an' de one dat say William Napoleon Smith, tack hit

on de box goin' to Vicksburg, an' don't fergit de three jugs dat goes to de hot-cat boat," he concluded.

Then he thought of something else and his huge fat sides shook with laughter.

"All dem live soldiers in dem coffins will be dead soldiers shore enough, dis time tomorrer after dem nigger undertakers gits 'em all bootlegged out. I bet de white folks thinks dat dere is lots of niggers dyin' up an' down de river dis year.

"Now den you all come on here an' set down an' jine me in a game of coon-can," urged the rev'rund, whose dignity was fast relaxing under the influence of the white mule. "I gits so tarnation tired bein' a preacher all de time I is just obleeged to finger de cards once in awhile. Fill up dem cups all round. We'll have one good game, den we'll beat it back to de river."

Coon-can and cans of white mule mix very well. And as they played and drank they became more hilarious and reckless, singing, talking, bragging and dancing.

The two men in the walled-up window space stared in, almost forgetting their cramped and damp quarters. Long before the moon had begun to cast shadows toward the east the whole crowd were frankly drunk. The rev'rund totally forgot the honor of the cloth, and as the last two of the motor-boat crew rolled over on the ground and went to sleep, he stood up on unsteady legs and drunkenly sang in a low bellowing bass the old negro camp meeting song, "Have Oil in Your Vessel When the Bridegroom Comes."

"Dat's hit, folks," he gesticulated to the flickering shadows thrown by the lanterns. "Lissen to me whilst I expounds de Gospel. Course I ain't no college preacher. I is just a home-made one. But dat don't make no diffunce. You do what de radio revivalist says do. Be at de landin' at de apinted hour! Dat's all! You be at de landin', an' we does de rest. Good licker, folks, wid no lye nor no tobaccer-juice in it! Nothin' but just good corn licker, and burnt sugar-water in hit to make it red, if you likes red. Or plain white mule ifen you likes hit white—all made by de bestest moonshiner whut dey is—an' a price which is in de reach of all—rich an' po', sick an' well. Dis is de radio frum de Gospel Boat *Glad Tidings*. Seek ye de Lawd—de Lawd—seek!"

With a concluding flourish and a dignified scowl the rev'rund staggered over to a cot

beside the still, stretched his mighty bulk upon it, and was soon outsnoring the others.

Big'Un and Rasmus looked at each other.

"Now den brother Big'Un, you has seen where dey makes de white mule, an' drinks hit too! Let's go back home an' git some sleep our own selves. Dese birds will sleep till long atter daylight an' den wake up an' cuss each other fer sleepin' too late. Dey won't make no more now till tonight. Dey is skeered to move eround in the daytime. An' dey just will get drunk! I tells 'em—let's go now!" Rasmus concluded hastily, scrambling out of the hole.

But Big'Un caught him by the leg as he climbed out and the old man turned about with such a look of terror on his face that it would have been Big'Un's time to laugh at a foolish fear if his mind had not been so engrossed with a daring idea that had come to him as not to heed the other's looks.

"Brother Rasmus, dem niggers is dead to de world. Us could hog-tie 'em an' tote 'em off an' dey wouldn't know nothin' a-tall about it. Let's me an' you slip in dere an' tie 'em up an' you stay an' watch whilst I runs down to New Or-leens an' gits dem Federalized cops an' comes back an' pinches 'em all. What say?"

Rasmus gradually released his trembling limb from Big'Un's grip, and gulped twice.

"Who, me?" he glared. "Does you mean me? Boy, I ain't lost nothin' inside dat cellar. An' I ain't huntin' fer nothin'. Not me!"

"But," urged Big'Un, "dem niggers is good fer three hundred dollars—gold money! Just as soon as de cops gits 'em. An' me an' you splits dat, fifty-fifty."

"Whut's three hundred dollars to a corpse?" asked Rasmus with unanswerable logic. "An' dat's just whut I would be, de minnit dem boys got back frum de Atlanta Pen. Naw! You don't mean me, big boy! I is brave but I ain't foolhardy!"

The idea in Big'Un's brain elucidated itself further.

"How come, Brother Rasmus? Ifen dey don't see us? Or knows us?" he asked hoarsely. "Less tie up de rev'rund good an' tight, put him in dat big coffin box an' take him to New Or-leens in de motor-boat. You coming erlong wid me—turn him over to de cops, an' den come back up here, show de cops de house where dese here others is all tied up an' us—we stays outside—peaceful in de canebrake, till dey is all gone. De

cops done promised me not to give me away, an' dey will do de same by you."

Rasmus had recovered from his scare when Big'Un had clutched his leg so convulsively and his shrewd old brain had resumed its functions. "Dat sounds more reasonable," he agreed, "but how 'bout dat boy on de watch down by de big road? He ain't drunk—whut erbout him?"

"Didn't know dere was sich a boy," said Big'Un airily, as he saw that Rasmus was agreeing with him. "But dat's easy. Tell him he is to go 'long wid us down to de motor-boat an' help tote dat coffin box wid de rev'rund inside. Us comin' outen de house he'll think we belongs to de boot-leggers. We is new men whut he ain't seen, see? Den when we gits him on de boat, I'll see dat he goes wid us—leave dat to me."

"Boy," agreed Rasmus admiringly, "you has shorely got a head on you. You had orter be a Grand Sword Toter your own self."

So the two crept around to where Rasmus knew the moldering cellar door was. They made their cautious way down the old brick steps and into the room where the boot-leggers slept the sleep of alcoholic coma.

"Shucks!" muttered Big'Un in disgust. "We ain't got no rope. An' I'll bet dey ain't none in ten miles of dis place."

"Den you loses, brother," grinned Rasmus, as he fished out a bundle of old plow lines and a coil of telephone wire from a corner. "We has got wire an' we has got rope. If dese is strong enough. Suppose dey wakes up, brother, whilst we is tyin' 'em?"

"Not a chance," whispered Big'Un reassuringly. "I has done seen too many folks all boozed up. All we has to do is handle easy an' dey will be just as dead to de world as sho' 'nough dead men. Come on! Let's git de rev'rund tied up an' in de coffin box first. He is de biggest an' de mos' dangerous. Tie him up good an' tight, put him in de box an' screw de lid down on him. I don't feel safe while he's outside dat box, even if he is snorin' an' snortin' like a injector-pump what has got clogged up."

"Hold on," cautioned Rasmus after they had strained their muscles lifting the comatose rev'rund into the coffin box, "if we screws de lid down too tight he'll smother an' perish away."

Big'Un reluctantly admitted that a little air might be beneficial, and only loosely screwed down the heavy top.



"Come on now," he urged, "let's tie up de others an' be on our way. We had orter be back here wid dem Federalized cops 'bout four o'clock dis evenin' if we makes good time wid dat motor-boat."

It was a gigantic task to convey the boxed-up and slumbering rev'rund down the short path to the motor-boat landing. But they managed it, with the "watch out at de gate," as Rasmus described the lone sentry the bootleggers had stationed against surprize from the big road that ran through the piney woods to the inland towns.



IT WAS just at that witching hour of the night, three o'clock in the morning, at which statistics show a man's courage is at its lowest ebb, and the sentry verified these findings.

"I don't like no job totin' coffins nohow," he panted as the three of them staggered down the path to the creek with their load. "Kinder skeery to me. But de rev'rund says nobody would think dat niggers would tote booze around in coffins, an' dat's why he uses 'em."

"An' I ain't married to dis job of night watchman neither," he continued after they had set the coffin box down on the motor-boat deck. "Dis here is one spookey ole house. An' screech owls! Oh boy! dem birds roost all 'round dis place. Dis place must shorely be ha'nted. But dey pays me well an'—" he rose from his seat with a gasp— "Man! Did you hear dat? Dat sound whut come frum dat coffin? Whut you boys got in dat box?"

"Dat warn't nothin'," said Big'Un easily from the bottom of the boat, where his struggles with a balky engine had at last been successful. "It was just dis here engine suckin' in de air whilst I was crankin' her. Come on, an' go down to de houseboat. De rev'rund said you could. An' we'll give you a snack to eat."

But just here a heavy sighing groan as if a hippopotamus muttered in its sleep came from the coffin box. The watchman let out a yell that was shouted back to him from the hills, and was grabbed by Big'Un, on the fly, as he leaped for the shore.

"No, boy, you is goin' wid us! Rasmus, cut de rope," and Big'Un shoved him down to keep the engine company. "Rasmus, watch him!" and Big'Un threw the boat into slow speed and shoved her nose down the meandering creek.

Rasmus must have had a soothing effect on the terrified watchman for he gave no more trouble. And when the *Glad Tidings* was reached he even helped lift the coffin box on board and place it in state in the rev'rund's cabin.

"Better tow de Gospel Boat on down de river wid us," Rasmus had whispered to Big'Un when they reached the river. "Somebody might come prowlin' eround an' find nobody home, go up de creek, find dem niggers an'——"

"Brother Rasmus, you is right," Big'Un agreed. "Hit will take longer but be lots safer. An' we can leave de Gospel Boat tied up at New Or-leens an' come back light. Git over on de *Glad Tidings* and throw me de tow-line. Hold de lantern so I kin see how to tie de rope."

"Mister," asked the now calm watchman, as the rope was made tight, "where is de rev'rund?"

"Never mind boy, where is de rev'rund," Big'Un replied masterfully, as they started slowly down-stream. "You set still an' be happy. Me an' Rasmus is runnin' dis boat. Go on over on de Gospel Boat when I slacks up on de tow-line an' help git us a snack to eat. All right Rasmus?"

"All right!" called the Grand Sword Toter. "We is clear of de trees."

With a snort and a mighty churning of the water the motor-boat took up the tow slack and started down-stream. Once clear of the trees Big'Un shut off his headlight so as not to attract attention from up-river craft and steered by moonlight. The river was at full bank and the steering was easy. At last he was headed toward New Orleans and the *Maggie May*! With a great sigh of relief, Big'Un glanced back at the *Glad Tidings* in his wake and then set himself to get all the speed out of the motor-boat that he possibly could.

"Say, big boy," Rasmus called to him cheerily, "us is goin' inside an' make some coffee an' cook breakfus'. We all will call you when hit's ready."

"All right!" Big'Un called back. "Is everything all right?"

"Shore is!" Rasmus assured him, and Big'Un again turned his attention to the river and his speeding motor-boat. His nerves were on edge and he got relief only from watching the speed he was making down the river. He dwelt with dreadful anticipation on hearing a shout from Rasmus

that would tell him the rev'rund had aroused from his slumbers. And then if he should free himself and burst from the coffin box—Big'Un shuddered. He was well assured that the former superdreadnaught of the navy could make easy prey of Rasmus and himself.

"Ifen I gits back to de *Maggie May* alive and whole," he muttered to himself, "I aims to lay off on de-teck-tive work for good an' all. I has done well. But no mo' for me. I knows when I has got enough."

The motor chugged cheerily on and the water rushing past assured Big'Un and he became less nervous and jumpy. The morning star at first a glowing globule of ruddy fire began to pale into a beautiful opal, and the eastern gulf clouds were mottled crimson and gold. The dark river gradually became a light gray, birds began to fly over, a few gulls flapped lazily by and from a farm house on the nearest bank a rooster crowed. The river was strangely still with the hush of dawn; no boats were in sight, and Big'Un, wearied and sleepy, nodded at the wheel. He awoke after an extra vigorous neck-jerking nod, looked about him quickly and then called:

"Rasmus, oh, Brother Rasmus! Where is dat coffee you done promised? I is so sleepy I is mos' dead."

There was no reply. He called again. The only answer he received was the derisive caws of a flock of crows flying overhead.



THE wondering Big'Un shut off his motor, pulled in his tow-line, and when the *Glad Tidings* drifted nearer sprang on board. A frantic search revealed there was no one there. However, the disappearance of the small flat boat tied to the stern of the *Glad Tidings* convinced Big'Un that Rasmus and the night watchman had not been spirited away.

Spirits brought to mind coffins and he returned quickly to the rev'rund's cabin to find that these gruesome reminders of mortality were still with him. He approached the one containing the rev'rund and stooped to listen with a long and anxious ear. Not a sound! Big'Un's mouth watered with the acute nausea of an overwhelming fear.

"Good lawd! Is he dead?" he whispered, and he put an impulsive hand on the lid. Should he unscrew the lid and look? He dared not!

Then he had a happy thought. He would try to talk to Joe over the radio. Maybe he could help, if he heard, and send the prohibition officers up-river before——

He had seen the rev'rund use it and believed that he could. He staggered out to the pulpit stand. The radio apparatus was gone also.

"I wish dem niggers——"

Big'Un was beginning when a heart-clutching shriek from a boat's whistle, apparently right on him, rushed him on deck. He found the *Maid of Memphis* so close he could have easily leaped on her deck, if the crew, crowded to the rails, with the mate in the center, had given him room.

"Say!" the mate yelled, after a profane resume of Big'Un's ancestry and a gloomy prophecy as to his prospects in the hereafter. "Where do you think you are? You can't park no houseboat in the middle of the Mississippi. Air you broke down or whut?"

"No suh, I ain't broke down," Big'Un answered joyously, glad to hear even a profane human voice.

"Well, git in that water Lizzie o' yourn, crank her up an' git to —— away from here. Where's the rest of your crew?"

"—— knows, boss! I started out wid 'em but dey is done gone."

Big'Un was now in the motor-boat trying to start his cooled engine when another yell from the *Maid of Memphis* all but put his overharassed nerves out of commission. A passenger who had been leaning over the rail of the upper deck, studying the motor-boat intently, called down to the mate, who yelled:

"Heave to, boy! There's a party on board here who wants to look that motor-boat over an' see if it ain't his'n that was stole not long ago!"

Big'Un swallowed his heart, shut off his engine and looked longingly toward the nearest bank. However, he was not left long with his fears. A small boat from the *Maid of Memphis* landed a prosperous up-river planter, in a brown linen suit and a Panama hat—together with the mate, on board the motor-boat.

"Boy," explained the planter, "in looking at you from the steamboat, it seemed to me that I could detect that one name had been painted out and another painted over it. And besides this boat looks just like the one I had stolen. Where's the owner? I want to compare the number on the engine

with the one I have here in my note book."

"Go ahead, boss," Big'Un said affably, "Ifen dis here is yore boat you is welcome. — knows hit ain't mine. I is just runnin' her down to New Or-leens fer de rev'rund whut owns de Gospel Boat whut I is towin'. Dat's all I knows."

The mate and the planter descended to the engine, wiped off the number plate with waste and with a small pocket-light compared the numbers.

"It's mine!" the planter exclaimed joyously. "Ain't that good luck! Come clean now, boy, and tell the truth, and I'll let you off easy. Didn't you swipe this boat from my landing up the river about two weeks ago? Ain't you been doing a towing business with it ever since? It looks like it," he added indignantly as he noted the evident lack of care his former pleasure craft had received.

"Boss," answered Big'Un fervently, "I don't know nothin' a-tall about dis here boat. I is just towin' dat dere revival boat down to New Or-leens fer de rev'rund and his Gospel singers 'cause dey wanted to go through on de train. As far as I knows hit all belongs to dem. An' dat's de dyin' truf. You kin have dis motor-boat an' welcome as fur as I is concerned."

The mate and the planter looked at each other. The surrender had been too easy. This was all lost on Big'Un whose morale was swiftly disintegrating under the torrent of terror that was rushing over his soul.

"Take hit boss," he began to untie the tow-rope, "if hit's yourn. Hit ain't mine an' I don't keer no mo' about hit. I'll just drif' on down de river in de Gospel Boat an' trust to luck to pick up a tow somewheres. You take your boat an' welcome."

Big'Un's affable willingness only made his guilt seem more certain to the mate and the planter.

The planter was easy-going, however, and not prone to press his advantage. He had found his motor-boat and was willing to call it a day. However, Big'Un's jinx was not yet through with him. The planter was just about to agree to take his regained boat and depart when he saw the large gilded sign on the houseboat.

"Gospel Boat—*Glad Tidings*," he read aloud. "Let's go aboard the houseboat and have a look," he suggested to the mate. "I've never seen inside of one of those Gospel Boats. Have we got the time?"

The mate glanced at the slowly moving *Maid of Memphis*, diluted the Mississippi with a consignment of tobacco-juice and said, "I told the pilot to tie up at Bolton's Landin's an' wait for us. I guess we can take a short look. Hey boy! Pull in your tow-line so we can step over on the houseboat."

Big'Un now gave himself up for lost, as with slow and trembling hands he hauled in the tow-line and held fast while the mate, followed by the planter, leaped on board the *Glad Tidings*.

And yet there was a ray of hope. The two might content themselves with looking over the meeting-place in the main cabin, with the pulpit stand, steamer chairs and cottage organ. They might entirely overlook the rev'rund's cabin where the coffin boxes were.

Came then the thought, the rev'rund was due to wake up any time now. White mule was a good sleep producer but its effects could not last forever. Suppose he should wake up while—an icy rivulet of fear ran down Big'Uns broad back as this fear made a home run. But, worse yet, suppose the white mule slumberer, assisted by the confined air space had merged into eternal sleep? Suppose——

"Hey, boy, come over here," the mate bellowed. "Where the old Harry did these coffins come from? Where you takin' 'em?"

"I know'd it," Big'Un muttered as with jerky tremulous hands he made his tow-line fast and all but staggered onto the deck of the *Glad Tidings*. "Luck plumb gone! Nothin' else left to do but go to jail an' den git hung, an' look to de Lawd an' be dismissed. I ain't strugglin' no mo'. I is ready to go!"

"Boy," the mate spoke briskly, "whut you doin' with these here coffins on this houseboat? One has a Board of Health Certificate from Memphis tacked on it; the other has one from Vicksburg. How come you with 'em?"

"Boss, all I knows is dey put dem coffins on board dis mornin' early at—at—I done fergit de place. An' de Gospel folks dey asked me to tow dis here boat down to the levee landin' at New Or-leens, an' dey took de train so as to be dere waitin' fer me when I got to de levee landin' an' dat's all I knows; I swears hit."

The mate first looked at him and then at the coffin boxes. Big'Un, who was



straining his hearing almost to the point of rupturing his ear-drums to detect a snore or some other sign of life from the rev'rund's coffin, looked guilty and ill at ease, in spite of his straight, clear cut explanation.

"Don't you remember the landing you started from?" asked the incredulous mate. "Where do you live anyway? What's your name? What are you doin' here?"

"Boss, I is frum Texas, an' I is de biler man, de fireman on de fruit steamer *Maggie May*, which is now docked in New Or-leens an' I is up de river visitin'."

"Visiting? Visiting who?"

"Nobody, boss; just moseyin' eround seein' de sights. Come up on a boat de other night. An' all I asks is to git back to de *Maggie May* alive; dat's all. Just to git back to de biler room on de *Maggie May*."

"Well, come on; let's go," urged the planter. "We've done seen the Gospel Boat. I've found my motor-boat, and that's enough. Let the boy alone. His tale sounds fishy but it ain't none of our funeral."

The mate shook his head.

"Can't do that colonel. If there's any dirty work been done, an' it looks like there has," he added eyeing Big'Un significantly, who was nervously folding and unfolding his big hands, "why we would be blamed if we didn't look into it. No tellin' whut's been goin' on here. Boy," turning suddenly to Big'Un, "unscrew them coffin boxes an' let's see whut's inside."

Big'Un glanced out the cabin window furtively, and longingly toward the bank against which the *Glad Tidings* had gently drifted. Could he? No, he couldn't. The burly mate stood between him and the door. He gulped hard twice, before he could reply.

"Me? Boss, you don't mean me! I ain't never had no truck wid dead folks."

"Oh, come on," urged the mate genially. "I'll help you. Dead folks can't hurt you," and he began to unscrew the two head screws on the box containing the rev'rund. Before he thought of himself Big'Un leaped forward and caught the mate's hands.

"White folks, for Gawd's sake don't prank wid dem coffins. Lemme go on wid 'em to New Or-leens. Dat's all I asks, boss, as a dyin' favor. Ifen you wants to go long wid 'em, I kin take you to de *Maggie May* an' de cap'n, he'll tell you who I is—an'—boss," desperately as the mate continued at the screws. "'Sides dem dead folks dey died——"

"What?" prompted the mate.

"Dey died—dey died——"

"How?" yelled the mate. "Don't stutter along that way."

"Smallpox," Big'Un finished faintly.

"What!" and the mate jumped back in alarm. "No wonder you are so mysterious. If them corpses died with smallpox you are good for a year in jail for transportin' 'em."

"Nonsense!" and the planter straightened up from consulting the certificates on the coffin boxes. "That boy's scared so bad he don't know what he is saying. One says malarial fever, the other pellagra. Nothing about smallpox here."

"Well," said the mate determinedly, "I'll be dad-blamed if I ain't goin' to clear this thing up right now an' git away frum here if I have to take this boy with me to jail."

"Now big boy," he ordered firmly, "come here an' unscrew these lids! I'm goin' to see! If it's dead folks, all right an' proper, you can go. If it ain't, Vicksburg jail for you."

"Boss," began Big'Un huskily, "I is comin' clean. There ain't no dead folks in dem coffins. In one of 'em is—is boot-leg whisky—white mule. In de other one is—in de next one—in——"

"What?" yelled the mate. "Spit it out!"

"A live man whut claims to be a rev'rund preacher but dat's pretenshun. He's a boot-legger, an' I has 'em inside dat box drunk, an' asleep an' all tied up. An' I is takin' him down to New Or-leens to turn him and de moonshine over to de Federalized cops an' git three hundred dollars reward an' dat's all."

The two white man looked at each other incredulously. The words rang true, for the first time, and yet the tale seemed impossible.

"Unscrew them coffin tops," repeated the mate firmly.

"Boss, dat rev'rund is a powerful man. He kin git de best of all three of us ifen he gits loose. Better let him be."

"Open up!" came inexorably from the mate. "We should worry about gittin' licked. I've got somethin' that makes up for size here in my pocket. Unscrew the lids!"

With uncertain, fumbling hands, Big'Un obeyed, as slowly as he could. The lid was loosened at last and the mate, assisted by the planter, lifted it off, and all three looked inside.

Big'Un was saved from fainting only by a robust constitution. With bulging eyeballs he stared within. There was perfect silence for the two white men were staring also.

Big'Un leaped to the other coffin box and feverishly attacked its screws. This one was opened quickly and he stared again ably assisted by the mate and the planter.

Big'Un struck his right fist in the palm of his left hand.

"Look! White folks look! Is dis con'jure or whut? Look!"

They were looking. Inside the first coffin in which Big'Un had helped deposit the slumbering form of the bibulous rev'rund was a dead hog. A large, lean lank long-tusked boar of the species known as razor-backs, but locally called Swamp Angels. In the other coffin box was his long-nosed, lantern-jawed, gaunt-bodied mate, stiff and still in the everlasting peace of death.

Pinned to the scarred dog-chewed ear of

the boar was a pink envelope. In a dreamy daze Big'Un reached down, took the envelope and handed it to the mate. Inside, printed with a lead pencil in a stilted uncouth hand, was the following:

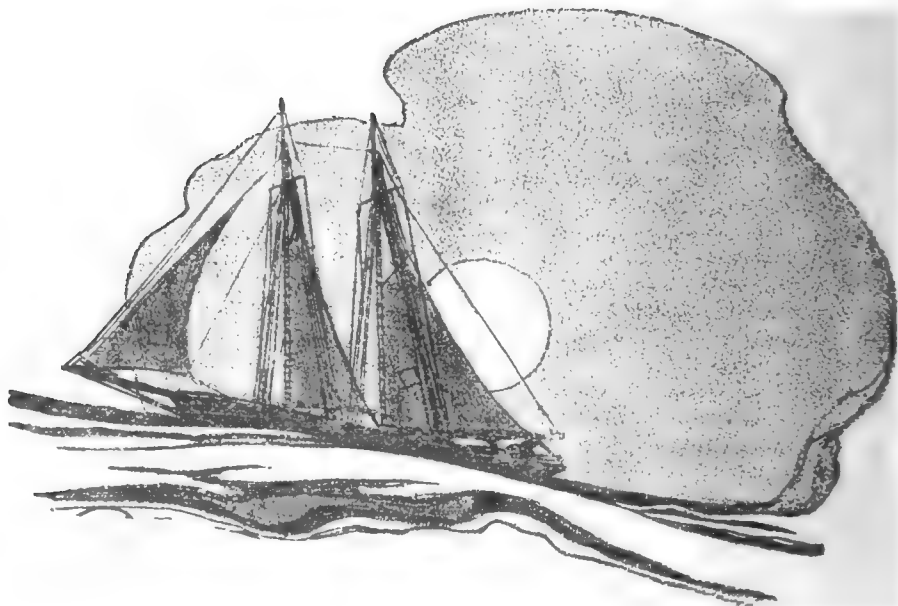
SIR BIG'UN, Knight and Brother:

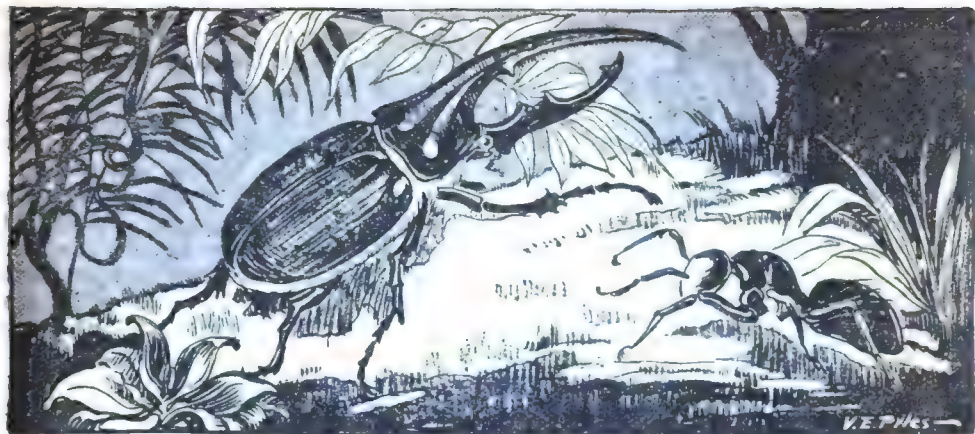
You asked ifen I was a Silver Fleece and Leaf. You never asked: Is you a moonshiner? I is; de best what is. I has been makin' white mule since slavery time, an' cause you is a Silver Fleece an' Leaf is de reason you ain't done dead as dese here hawgs what I had done killed when you busted outen de swamp into de clearin'. If de rev'rund an' dem boys hadn't got boozed up (dey ain't drunk now) I aimed to skeer you so bad you would have died plumb dead.

RASMUS—

Sir Knight and Sword Toter of the Silver Fleece and Leaf.

P. S.—The motor-boat ain't our'n. Sell it, as you seems to need money. Donate de *Glad Tidings* to de African Methodist Church at New Orleans. We don't need it no more 'cause we is goin' away from here while de goin' is good. Don't fergit you is obligated.





# WARDEN of the HERDS

## by F. St. Mars

Author of "Out of Date," "A Border Raid," etc.

**F**ORMICA stood at the entrance to the breach in the mud wall of the green-fly kraal and viewed the outside world. Behind her in the gloom of the great mud-walled, mud-roofed kraal, which the ants had built over the aphides—or plant lice, or green-fly, if you like—to protect them, the funny, fat, little green bugs could be seen, motionless, each anchored by its brush to the stem of the shrub on which the kraal was built, sucking, sucking, sucking up the juices of the shrub. Before her was the great noisy world, with its blue sky, its green and rustling mountains of leaves, and its bird song and calls.

Formica was a "worker ant," or, if you prefer, one of the wingless neuter females who comprise the real population of an ants' nest, and who carry on the whole of the labor of that nest. You distinguish her from the large queen who just lays eggs and that's all, and the winged male ant, who is of no account and dies as quickly as he decently can.

Also Formica was the Warden of the Herds, head of those worker ants told off to see to the protection of the little, fat, green-fly, and generally look after them. She had found the breach in the wall upon going into the kraal first thing in the morning, and had found also the twig nearest it

empty of green-fly, or littered in places with their dead bodies.

They were utterly helpless little creatures and could not defend themselves so well as sheep. It was her business to do that for them; in return for which they gave up to the ants, when caressed, the sweet drops of "honey dew," which was no more than the juice of the shrub passed through their bodies nearly unaltered because they were such gluttons and fed so fast.

Some fiend from the outer world had discovered the breach—heaven knew what had made *that*—since she had left the kraal all safe and sound and gone home upon the previous evening. Remained now the job of executing that fiend and of getting the breach built up again.

Ant-like, Formica was highly excited, racing out upon the branches, waving her antennæ, which were her feelers, and more than eyes and ears rolled into one, in the air. Opening and shutting her suggestive shear-like jaws—which was her way of shaking her fist—and generally kicking up a dust. But if she had kept a little bit cooler, and not been so intensely feminine, she would have saved time by discovering the cause of the killings sitting quite still just outside the breach against the wall.

She did discover it at last, and for a moment the sight of it fetched her up on all



sixes—ants have six legs, not four. She beheld before her a thing. It was not a grub like ordinary grubs exactly. It was more, yet you could not rightly call it an insect.

It was long. It was thick. It was gray with yellow spots. It had legs, *and* jaws—the jaws were the worst part about it. One day it would aspire, after turning into a chrysalis, to blossom forth into a dainty little round ladybird. Meanwhile it was by no means round, evidently fierce, and rather horrible, and a sort of grub.

And instantly afterward Formica attacked it in her impulsive feminine way, which was furious and distinctly courageous. Also under the circumstances it was rather mad. However—

Somewhere upon the creature's body Formica got a hold with her jaws, and thenceforth hung on like a tiny bulldog, pulling and tugging every way in her rage. Fate, however, must have been looking after her that day, for it was ordained that she should take hold of that thing just in one of the places where it could not double and take hold of her, at least, not unless she let go. If it had been able to do so, her life would have ended abruptly. But it did everything else, in the wriggling, writhing line, and for the next few seconds Formica, still hanging like a vise, viewed the world from every angle possible, including upside down. Also she had leisure to think on the nature of what she had tackled.

Time after time the little ant tried to deliver a sting, but each time she was shaken out straight, until finally, with one colossal springlike jerk, the thing managed to break her hold, and she found herself sailing out grandly through space, to land at length upon the flower-bed beneath.

It was rather like falling off the dome of St. Paul's to us, but with Formica no bones were broken because she had no bones to break. Neither was she hurt much because her fine and flexible armor coat took the bounce, so to speak. She lay still, therefore, only a few seconds, and then calmly picked herself up and hurried away.

Now it is one of the compensations for being a soldier or sailor, in that you have one job, you know how to do it, and have nothing else to concern yourself with but the execution of that job. If the world comes to an end around you, it makes no difference; you stick to your job. And Formica, like all ants, was in just that posi-

tion. She was disciplined. She had her job, she knew her job, and troubled about nothing else. Wherefore it was clear to her instantly what to do.

There were, by the way, a few thousand ant cattle—green-fly, that is—more or less upon those shrubs, and she was Warden of the Herds. Her job was to see that they remained there "all present and correct." Like the soldier, if she lost her life in the process it was no matter; another warden would at once take her place; but the herds *must* remain "all present and correct" all the time.

Wherefore did Formica hurry at once to the nest—the big ant city of the garden. There were others, but none so big, or so powerful as this one. Probably it contained as many inhabitants as a big human city, and, so far as that garden was concerned, it was a very Rome.

"All roads lead to Rome," and all roads led to that ant city, for Formica had not gone a dozen inches across the flower-bed before she came to what appeared to be a quite palpable by-path, on which she was alone. This soon led to an obvious high-road, whereon an ant or two could be seen hurrying upon their lawful occasions toward the nest.

Anon she passed through a roof forest of flowers, where she could see ants climbing like steeplejacks high above her among the great nodding yellow blossoms as they worked, collecting supplies of honey, while a gang a little lower down showed busy upon a covered way that led to the corral of a small herd of aphides feeding near. And at the end of this forest two other high-roads joined the first one, which itself grew broader, till, as she drew near the gates, Formica became almost lost among ants, loaded and empty, hurrying cityward.

These roads were made roads, in a way, beaten by the passage of countless thousands of ants' feet, marked further by the removal of obstacles from their surface. In all directions they branched out, marked by vegetation, into the open garden. From all directions they led, joining hands gradually, toward the nest.



AT LAST, under the dense shadow of a sycamore, close to the hedge, Formica came unto a hole in the ground. Outside, a band of ants lounged, examining something—which was the body

of an ant of another species from another nest, brought in by some zealous soul from close by.

They were the guards for the time. No stranger, even from another nest of the same species probably, could get past them and live. But of all those thousands, yes, and hundreds of thousands in their city there was not one whom they could not recognize at once.

How? Ah! If I could answer that I could tell you one of the secrets of the wild. They knew, not by sight, perhaps, nor by a password, nor even, it may be, by scent. I don't know. They knew, anyway, and that was enough for the ants—too much for spies. And not only they, but every other ant in the city who was of any age and had had any sort of experience, knew also just as much.

It was said of the queen of the nest, however—and she was a great age, probably five or even seven years old—that she knew every ant from every egg she had ever laid, and heaven alone knows how many that was, seeing that she was, at that time at any rate, the mother of the city. And, moreover, it was known that there were some old, old, but quite lively and active worker ants who had been with her ever since the queen was crowned almost, who also could do quite, or nearly as great marvels in the recognizing line.

Formica hurried at once into the hole, and in doing so she entered the portals of the outer gate of the nest—the word “nest” in regard to ants may be considered rather as another name for “city” or “town,” than as what we generally mean as a nest.

She found herself at once in a very narrow corridor, which a soldier—especially an engineer officer—would have seen was a work of some strategy, since only an ant or two could move along it abreast, and, therefore, it could be held by few against many. A little way farther on this narrow tunnel opened out into a wide hall, across which she trotted, passing on the way two or three ants dimly seen and motionless in the shadow, who were on guard there.

The end of the hall was formed by an immense—to her—pillar of earth, which so almost completely barred further progress as to allow only a narrow passage upon either side, which again could be traversed by only two ants abreast if you count their bodies, or one alone if you took the total

span of their legs. This was the middle gate.

Passing through one of these tunnels, Formica again came out into a long hall, which at the far end had also two narrow passages, and that was the third or inner gate. And you will concede, I think, that the enemies who could get past that triple line of fortifications would have to be very stubborn fighters indeed. In every case, you will note, a few ants could hold a whole army back.

Formica now found herself in the great main excavation of the nest itself. It was not elaborate. Indeed it was a good example of the Spartan simplicity which characterizes the ants. It was simply an immense bare building, unrelieved by anything except several very large pillars that upheld, or seemed to uphold the roof. On three sides were simply bare walls of earth, but on the fourth or farther side it was pierced by three or four tunnels which led to an inner, smaller chamber. And that was all.

Nevertheless, for grim, unrelieved, simple strength, as a fortress it would have been hard to beat.

Formica found the main chamber crowded with worker ants—nearly all busy. Here was a party attending and feeding the helpless fat grubs, which are the first edition of ant after leaving the egg. There was a party arranging a row of what we call ants' eggs, but are really the second edition of ant after pipping the egg, and called the chrysalis, or pupa; these did not need feeding, but were very subject to damp and temperature changes, and had to be carried from spot to spot accordingly. At the far end, Formica could see an immense crowd gathered, all facing inwards, and she knew by the same token that somewhere in the middle of that crowd moved H. M. the Queen of the nest.

Her business, however, was neither with the queen, her bodyguard, keepers of eggs, nurses of grubs, tenders of pupa, foragers, honey collectors, road tenders, nor nest repairers. To each their allotted task, and hers was none of these. She was the Warden of the Herds, and her business was urgent and important.

She had to do with the herd guards, the honey dew milkers, the aphid hunters, and the herd kraal builders.

At top speed, therefore, she ran up to the crowd that surged about the queen, and touched one ant on the outskirts of the crowd on the shoulder. The ant turned

round promptly and for a few moments they discoursed, not by voice, but with their antennæ or feelers, touching them together, or waving them about, as people who speak fluently a sign language.

Then she ran on to another ant and an excited parley ensued. Then to another, and another, and yet others, till at last she had collected her reinforcements, and they stood ready to follow her, twenty and four, no, five worker stalwarts.

These were all fully tried and experienced ants of the world, one might say; the younger ones being usually retained about the nest on more sheltered occupations.

There was nothing of the "wait and see" principle about those ants. Indeed efficiency is a watchword with them, almost a religion, and Formica came hurrying out of the nest at the head of her little force exactly four minutes, three seconds after she had disappeared into it.

So excited was Formica over her errand, however, that long before they reached their goal she had got so far ahead of the others that they looked very much like losing her, if a chance gang returning from honey collecting had not delayed her somewhat and allowed them to catch up. Still she was a long way first at the base of the stem of the shrub on which was her green-fly kraal. The others straggled out behind, following her more by scent than by sight.

A covered way of mud had been built up the stem of the tree to the kraal and into this Formica hurried and up to the kraal. The green fly inside, religiously sucking away like so many living syphons at the life juices of the shrub, took not the slightest notice of her as she rushed among them, stumbling over many in her path along twigs to the gap.

But the gap was deserted and outside too there was nothing. The twenty and five stalwarts, arriving more sedately, found Formica rushing about outside "like an earwig in a corn-stalk," and finding nothing.

As a matter of fact, they had seemed rather pessimistic about the job all along, as if they had—hardened wordlings as they were—expected Formica to bring to the nest some tangible proof of her story, such as a leg, or something, and had not given her quite that measure of support which she had a right to expect.

And now, finding nothing to kill, they began, one after the other, to turn back and

retrace their steps, with rather the air of people who have been "sold" against their better judgment, and know it.

Formica remained outside dashing about wildly, but it was not she that proved herself no liar.

One of the other ants going back through the kraal down a twig, blundered right on top of the slayer of the herds, and because she was an ant, took hold instantly.

Ants can not cry out and summon their pals to their rescue. It is unfortunate. For this particular one it was very unfortunate, because the others took some long seconds before they got wise to the fact that there was a fight going on at all. When they did, they got busy quickly and it was extremely unfortunate for that little grub, that ladybird that might have been. The fight which followed was its last.

But there is one thing more troublesome than inducing a nice big number of green-fly to feed all of a bunch on the very twigs where you want them to, and that is keeping other insects off them. Green-fly are good to eat from the insect viewpoint, and nearly everybody's fair game. That is why the ants built them a roof. Else they wouldn't have them long.

Also most every insect, and its other and more youthful pre-insect shape, has a habit of prying into holes.

Therefore, everybody who passed and was of an inquiring turn of mind, looked in at the kraal through the breach, and, the hunting members among 'em, amazed and delighted at what they saw, tripped in. Ants cannot put up notices that "trespassers will be prosecuted," you know, and nobody would take any notice if they did.

In the wild you must hold what you've got—if you can. Notices are no good. The only kind of notice that is honored in the wild is the fang, and beak, claw, talon, sting and poison dart.

This explains, then, why it was that Formica, turning at length from assisting in carving the ladybird for transference in joints to the nest, found herself face to face with the peculiar long, quizzical face of a worker wasp.



FORMICA was about as long as the wasp's face, but Formica was also Warden of the Herds, and hadn't gained that position for just singing "Kismet." She stood upon her hind and middle



legs, and leaving the other pair in the air, champed her jaws and invited the wasp—who was hovering in midair—to come on.

The wasp didn't. She backed away instead. I don't know why, especially as I had rather expected her to eat Formica as a savory. Evidently, however, the wasp knew why, or thought she did, which, so far as Formica was concerned, was the same thing. Formica escaped from those jaws of death by sheer pluck alone, by the outward look of things, and the picture of her standing on her tail, brandishing her jaws at the mighty wasp backing air above her, was rather like that of a sparrow defying an eagle.

Five of the twenty and five stalwarts had gone off with sections of the beetle larva to the nest. Each section looked as big as the bearer, but no matter. They carried it in their jaws and with a high head, clear of the ground, oblivious it seemed of the wonder of their strength. The remaining stalwarts, with Formica, proceeded to repair the breach, and save the ravaged herds while doing so. Earth had to be fetched up through the covered way from the flower-bed beneath, every particle, and that breach wasn't mended with one particle, I want to tell you, nor yet with one hundred.

Formica continued restlessly to round up her precious herds. She seemed to know that they were still in plenty of danger; perhaps she smelled it. And, as a fact, she was quite right. For she had not taken many turns about before she came upon what is known as a carnivorous beetle.

There are plenty of them, plenty of species, I mean, all coated in very efficient armor, all heavily armed, all great meat eaters, "and mighty hunters before the Lord." This one happened to wear a coat of mail of shining golden bronze; some have finer coats even than that. The thing had evidently found the green-fly juicy, and made the best of a good chance, as two big gaps—the whole length of two twigs—attested.

It was characteristic of Formica that, though a dwarf beside her opponent, she gave battle at once. Nor did it appear that, considering its reputation in these matters, the beetle seemed burningly anxious to begin, but a very furious Formica firmly fixed to one of its back legs seemed to attract its attention finally, and it whipped its big jaws around to decapitate her.

Next instant it was dancing a jig. Yes, a jig, for Formica, unable to get her poison through its armor, had squirted that same into its eyes—formic acid, pure and undiluted, I believe—at a range of about one-eighth of an inch. It was as bad as throwing vitriol, almost, and that beetle seemed to find it so. But that beetle was a long way from being dead, so that, in its mad fury, it still looked as if Formica was going to lead the way to the grave first, when the fight attracted the attention of the stalwarts working upon the breach.

Whereupon the ten building up the gap came down and hurled themselves with ferocity upon the foe, and the ten who were fetching earth, finding that all hands had left the job at the gap, followed suit, and that beetle became extremely busy indeed. All the same, two ants were slain before they finally managed to saw the giant's head off between them, and even then, when his head fell, it took a third ant in its locked jaws with it, who never, never got out of them in this life any more.

After that eight ants went back to earth fetching, and nine others once more returned to repairing the breach. Formica went on with her researches, and in two minutes had come upon more trouble.

My! What a lot of out of work hungry people had taken advantage of that gap to walk in and upset the green fly. No wonder the ants built a shed with a roof to it to protect their herds.

Formica had just finished "milking" one of the green-fly, by the simple process of stroking it gently till it gave out a drop of honey dew, which she licked up—she was thirsty after her strenuous doings, naturally—when there turned up, coming along the branch upon which she stood a—thing. You could not well call it by any other name, it was simply—a thing.

The thing was shaped somewhat like a hock bottle, with what it carried in place of a head at the thin, or cork, end. No arms or apparent legs had the thing, and it moved by some special machinery of its own devising. One day, if Fate ordained, and green-fly were numerous enough to keep it going, it looked to perform the miracle of turning, by way of a pupa or chrysalis, into one of those wasplike flies which hover by the hour over the flower beds and the lawn in the hot Summer sun, if—if—if—well, if Formica hadn't spun around and seen it.

I don't think it saw Formica, not then, anyway—if it could see—for it certainly picked up a green fly, reared its presumable head, or thin end, in the air with the green fly stuck and kicking thereon, sucked the luckless little creature white, and cast the corpse aside. This was a quicker method of "milking" green-fly than the ants', certainly, if more wasteful, but it was bad to do it when an ant was by.

Formica nearly tumbled off the branch with indignation. Then she fell upon the thing like a little crazed fiend, and the thing, who had been reared up in the air, snake fashion, came down to realities again with a jerk.

This was a different manner of foe to tackle than the beetle, and Formica's shears cut true and cruelly into the great bag that was the thing. Moreover, even if the thing could have pierced her own light armor with his mouth, she seemed far too nimble to give it a chance. And indeed the fight was going on, from Formica's point of view, very jollily indeed, when she happened to glance over her shoulder—at least, that was how it seemed—and almost froze with horror upon the spot.



THERE was war, red hot war at the gap. A struggling, striving, straining heap of bodies filled the space from the broken wall to broken wall, swaying wildly backward and forward as the fight wavered.

The whole thing had happened so suddenly that nobody had thought about a general alarm. The nine stalwarts engaged in rebuilding the wall were fighting, evidently for their lives, and the eight carrying earth up the covered way to them from the ground below had on arrival no time to do more than fling down their loads and hurl themselves into the struggle.

A raiding squadron of ants from the nest of another species, had evidently been apprised of the position of things earlier in the day by some wandering scout, and had come hot-foot to capture the herds. And the herds *must not* be captured. Formica knew that.

The herd in question under that roof was connected by covered passages with two other herds in other nearby kraals, and these were all the nest possessed, and afforded the sole supply of honey dew to the nest save for chance-found and unim-

portant "wild" green-fly out upon the trees.

And honey dew was almost essential to the welfare of the nest. It afforded not only an important part of the frequently exhausted workers' refreshment, but also, there is some reason to believe, found its way as at least a portion of their food to the grubs whose health was absolutely necessary to the prosperity of the nest. If they had not a constant flow of grubs growing into pupa and so into ants to keep up the fighting force of the nest, that fighting force must quickly fall below its proper numbers, and so allow their enemies' armies to prevail against them.

Formica arrived in the middle of that mix-up, jaws first, and at the double—like the sailor, she usually executed orders "at the double"—and the enemy knew she was there. To be more exact, one of them was aware of her on its back, just as it was about to finish off one of the right good stalwart workers at the breach, whom it had by the throat, as it were. Then it wasn't aware of anything because Formica had sawed its head off.

Leaping round, Formica and her companions, fighting side by side, faced the onslaught of five, and held them, slaying two in the process, though giving back step by step. In the struggle, Formica had got her jaws locked in those of a foe, and just as she had got her poison to work and made that foe break its hold, only to be grabbed afresh by Formica, that little Amazon was aware of a combined rush from the outside, and had the disgust of seeing the breach carried, the last five of the stalwarts going back fighting, shoulder to shoulder, to the last.

The odds were enormous, at least five to one, and it looked like losing the whole of that herd anyway. Formica knew this, but she thought nothing of her life, only the good of the nest, which is antlike and pretty to think of.

Freeing herself from her damaged foe, she charged into the Maelstrom of enemy ants surging before the devoted five, who, although not done for, were being slowly pulled down by sheer numbers, and instantly Formica found herself at grips with only three enemy workers at the same time. She and they were swept along in the combined dash through the gap, and she saw the roof of the kraal overhead, and was dimly aware of the forms of the green-fly

mixed up with wickedly fighting ants all around her.

The kraal was lost, and she, the Warden of the Herds, had been unworthy of her trust.

Grimly Formica fought on, grabbing, slashing, stabbing, heaving, squirming, but it was all no use, she had to go under in the end, and she fell finally with her three foes on the top of her, and one of their severed legs in her jaws. But it was only a matter of seconds now before she was killed. She felt the point of an enemy's jaws at what did her for a throat, and she knew that it was the end. And then—and then——

It was as if an avalanche had hurled itself upon them. Formica felt the weight of her antagonists go from her; felt the feet of ants charging over her—the other way, toward the breach—saw legs, legs everywhere racing forward and, looking up, beheld ants, ants of her own nest, in every direction,

swarming up every twig, pouring out of the covered way, dashing in a solid mass, with the remnants of the raiders flying before them, through the breach.

What had happened was that, forgotten by all, the ants who had gone back with the cut up sections of the ladybird larva had carried word to the nest of the dangerous weakness of affairs at the kraal, and had returned, bringing a gang of some hundreds of workers to build up the breach, and to mount guard and drive off invaders while the work was being done. And they came just in time. Another few minutes would have seen all the green-fly that the raiders could not carry off slain, and the raiders themselves gone past all following with their booty.

So that is the story of how Formica saved her charges, and for all I know she holds the proud title of Warden of the Herds still. She deserves to. Don't you think so?

## CAJUN RIDERS

by Nevil Henshaw

**T**HE old time cajun of the Louisiana prairie was an inveterate horseman. His walking was chiefly confined to the trip between house and stable. Afterward he was off to inspect his scattered live stock; if he was fortunate enough to have some; to the crossroads store for a talk and a smoke, squatting low on his haunches; perhaps merely to some nearby coulée for the inevitable mess of crawfish.

If his horse was fast, he ran him Sundays, going out to one of the several tracks that were scattered about the prairie. These were private, straight-away courses laid out upon the short grass, often with only the hoof marks to guide one.

Then there were the trips to town, the traveler stiff and uncomfortable in his unaccustomed finery. I have seen cajuns burned black by years of exposure to the sun, riding in from their distant homes with that supreme elegance, an umbrella,

balanced carefully above them. And I have seen them later, after many miles of jogging upon a real horse, spend the afternoon and all their available cash in whirling solemnly upon the wooden chargers of a merry-go-round.

Horses were cheap in those early days; and the dealers knew little of our present day highly developed systems of profiteering.

Indeed, I remember one old fellow who was asked about his affairs with the following result.

"What are you doing now, Perrot?"

"You don't hear? I sell dem pony."

"How much do you pay for them?"

"Six pias."

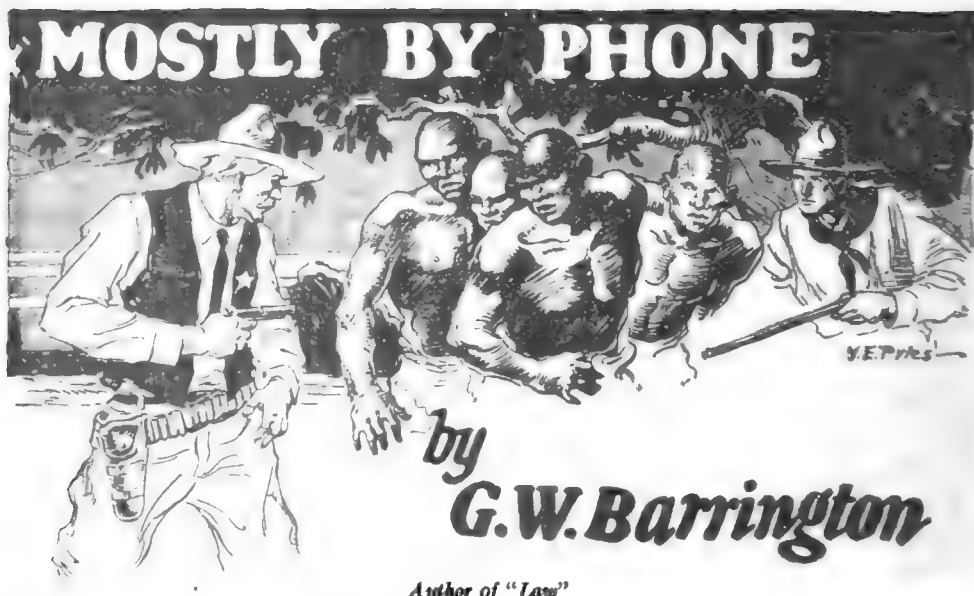
"What do you get for them?"

"Five pias."

"That doesn't make you much money, does it?"

"Wall, me, I must do *something* for support my wife and family."





**B**OB FORREST, veteran sheriff of Seminole County, Texas, guzzled the last drop of his second helping of breakfast coffee with a sustained "a-a-ah!" which his watchful helpmeet interpreted as an order for more of the same, so she waddled ponderously to the kitchen stove and produced the third and final cup of Rio, then clumped off to the "room" to secure the weekly copy of the Seminole County *Banner*—her husband's invariable breakfast dessert, on Thursdays.

Using the cup as reserve storage, and the saucer as a moderator of temperature, the old sheriff proceeded to absorb the steaming beverage with long, soul-satisfying inhalations, eying the paper slantwise the while.

Commencing with the first letter on the upper left-hand corner of the front page, Bob proceeded methodically to read every word in that column and the next. Half way down the third he gazed long over the rim of his saucer, making no progress whatever either with lips or eyes.

Busy with crumb tray and brush, "Ma" Forrest ceased foot movements, brushed tentatively in one place for a few seconds and looked inquiringly across the checkered cloth.

Soul communion. System of telepathy built up through thirty years of intimate association.

Bob Forrest was allowing good coffee to cool to a state of innocuous lukewarmness within an inch of the place where good hot coffee ought to go.

Bob Forrest was reading something of unusual interest.

Ma Forrest was standing still, dabbling idly at a crumbless section of the cloth, instead of trot-trotting along the table, grooming it with deft, vigorous sweeps of the crook-backed brush.

Ma Forrest wanted to know.

Disposing of the contents of the saucer at one masterful gulp, Bob made preparation for elocutionary effort by brushing his drooped iron-gray mustaches back toward his ears and tugging lightly at the wilful wisp which ever was suspended down his honest, thought-furrowed forehead. Having thus pulled the signal cord which opened the flood-gate of erudition, Bob grasped the paper firmly in both hands to show it who was the boss, and painstakingly read aloud:

### NOTICE!

To all whom it may concern: This is to notify you that my wife, Beulah Brahmstadt, has left my bed and board, and I will not be responsible for any indebtedness which she may incur.  
Henry Brahmstadt.

Never was a table-cover brushed more thoroughly. Round and round went Ma,

bristling with indignation against men in general, the Brahmstadt family as a tribe, and stern, austere, stingy, covetous Henry Brahmstadt in particular.

Punctuating each sentence with a vicious *thump* of the brush, Ma recalled how pretty Beulah Marshal had married Brahmstadt, turning every cent of her modest inheritance over to him on their wedding day, and slaving her heart out for him ever since, with scarcely a decent house-gown to cover her back, and nothing fit to go out in.

Bob consumed the remainder of the coffee and the news, dropping a corroborating "uh-huh" at each of Ma's infrequent pauses, and meekly absorbing his share of the wholesale denunciation which, poured in torrents on Henry Brahmstadt's pious head, splashed over now and then, showering the entire male sex.

Ma's guns were not trained upon her husband, of course, but he was within range, while Brahmstadt was out of reach.

Ma told all of it while she was about it—a habit she had.

Beulah had been a sweet, old-fashioned girl, a comfort to her mother and a good hand at sewing and cooking. What she ever could have seen in that ugly-faced Brahmstadt, and him forty and a widower at that, was more than Ma ever could understand. He had plenty of money, but he kept it tucked away in that old bank, where it did them no good whatever, so he did, while Beulah went half-dressed, and was one of two women in the neighborhood who had to use home-made yeast. Mary Foster was the other, but there was some excuse in Mary's case, for Jake Foster was poor, and a cripple at that.

For Beulah to have to put up with such doin's was just low-down, or'nary cussedness on Henry's part, that's what it was, with her a-sewin' an' a-washin' an' a-patchin' for him and his three grown sons left by a former wife who had stood it as long as a body could, and then died to get a little rest.

To give 'em credit, the boys appeared to think a whole lot of Beulah. Steve, the elder brother, had taken her part against his father time an' again, and, now that the twins, Ed and Fred, had grown up, they 'peared to sympathize with her, too.

"A-puttin' it right out in the paper, that-away!" shrilled the scandalized Ma.

"Left his bed an' board, did she? Left

his bed an' board? Well, it's the best thing she ever done, at that. Why, the poor thing never had no bed fit fur a body to rest on, an' as to the board, her butter an' egg money paid for all of that that wasn't raised in the garden, an' she tended it."

If Henry Brahmstadt, with all of his prayin' an' groanin' in meetin', went to heaven, then Ma wanted to go the other way, and she didn't expect to have to do it, at that.



AT THE dingy, tobacco-scented office, the sheriff found things about normal, which means that his deputies, Luke Haskell and Danny Simmons, were playing checkers, with Danny hopelessly outclassed, but doggedly persistent.

Given a rifle or a billiard cue or a baseball, or anything else which called for a fine co-ordination of brain, hand and eye, Danny Simmons' steady nerves and cool, calculating judgment would carry him through against almost any adversary; but when it came to quiet contest over a board, or at a card-table, he was a success only as a good loser.

Scarcely had the sheriff settled in his stiff-backed armchair, and assumed the position of unofficial referee, which by mutual consent always was accorded him, when the telephone in the hall tinkled and Bob ambled out to answer.

With hostilities in the checker world temporarily suspended, the two deputies listened.

"Yes, this is me. How are you all, Mr. Brahmstadt?"

"Uh-huh. I read it, an' was right sorry 'bout it. When did she leave?"

"Uh-huh.

"Uh-huh.

" 'S that so?"

Ears pricked, Luke and Danny peered through the hall door, to see the old sheriff gazing solemnly into the phone, nodding his head in affirmative, or shaking it in negative, as if the person at the other receiver could see.

Luke, the elder and more experienced deputy, nudged Danny and whispered:

"Business on the hooks, son. When the ol' man nods into a phone thataway he has nothin' on his mind 'cept what the other feller's a-sayin'. May 's well put them checkers away. He—sh-h-h!"—as the sheriff's easy drawl came again:

"Wal, that's too bad; it shore is. Has any one seed 'er since she left home a-Tuesday afternoon?"

"Wal, I'll ride right over to Foster's an' see what Mary knows. Not a hull lot prob'ly, but you never kin tell."

There was no shuffle in the sheriff's gait as he returned to the office, and the brisk air of authority, the crispness of his voice, marked him as the alert, competent officer which all of Seminole County knew him to be.

"You boys been listenin', so you know what's up. Beulah Brahmstadt hain't been home since late a-Tuesday an' Henry thinks she done run off, but some of the neighbors 'low she might have been killed in the woods.

"Henry thinks she'll turn up some's 'mong 'er relatives, but that's a mebbe-so, an' this department hain't run on no mebbe-sos. We gotta go at this 'ere thing from all ways, an' take no chanst on anythin' a-gittin' by us.

"Luke, you hustle a posse, an' scratch the woods from Foster's to the Neches River. No use lookin' fur a trail; it rained heavy down thar las' night. Bring in ev'ry stranger, an' ev'ry nigger who kain't tell whar he was a-Tuesday evenin', an' prove it by some good white man. Don't guess 'bout nothin'. If they's any doubt, send 'em in. If we git the wrong feller in jail, we can always let 'im out, but if the right feller's out, we kain't always git 'im in. Call me at Foster's 'bout noon, an' at Brahmstadt's any time after three, if you get a chanst. An' don't stop huntin' them woods till I send word."

The sheriff turned to his desk and commenced writing in a slow, laborious scrawl, as Luke filled a canteen from the water bucket and went stumping out in his high-heeled boots. A few moments later they heard his pony clatter down the street.

The sheriff handed Danny a slip.

"That's 'er description. Telegraft it to ev'ry officer on that there list in the safe. Git the station agent to wire ev'ry trainman who run in an' out of here a-Tuesday or Wednesday. When you git through, go to Brahmstadt's an' wait fur me.

"An', Danny, you shoot like lightnin' an' you think like lightnin' at a pinch, but this here job's diff'runt. I'll do what thinkin' needs to be did today, an' you boys just keep a-jumpin'. Luke understands all that,

but you're young at the game, so I'll tell you the rules of this office onst more: Keep your mouth shut, your eyes an' years open, an' your leetle gun whar you can reach it quick."



AT FOSTER'S, two miles out, the sheriff squirmed uneasily on the porch step, while Mary wept into her apron and told how Beulah had called there just as she was starting to get supper on Tuesday. The two women had a reciprocal arrangement about the home-made yeast, Mary producing enough for both on Tuesdays for Wednesday's baking, and Beulah returning the favor on Fridays for use on Saturday.

On this particular occasion, Beulah appeared worried, and her friend was certain that she had been crying. She had taken the yeast in a little cream pitcher and gone by the woods trail. It was about a mile to Brahmstadt's, going that way.

That was all from Mary in the way of direct evidence. She did add a few extraneous, incompetent and irrelevant remarks singularly like those the sheriff had listened to at the breakfast table, which caused him shrewdly to suspect that the telephone line between his home and the Foster place was in good order and had been connected lately.



THE sheriff and Danny arrived at the Brahmstadt farm almost simultaneously, and a few minutes later Luke called up to report two white strangers and a half-dozen negroes in the net.

Dutifully mindful of "them rules," Danny listened silently as Brahmstadt stated that Beulah had failed to return from Foster's, and he had assumed that she had deserted him, as she had threatened to do several times recently.

Brahmstadt explained that Beulah had acted queerly for some weeks past, and was cross and irritable over trifles. He had remonstrated with her over the size of the household accounts, and she had threatened to leave. Evidently she had done just that. He was sorry, of course, and felt the disgrace keenly, but if it was the Lord's will, it was not fitting for him to complain. Wastefulness and pride were sins, and he had done no more than his duty as a husband and a Christian in striving to make Beulah see and do the right.



The twins were at work in the fields as usual, and Steve, working about the barn, passed in and out of the house frequently, saying almost nothing but evidently deeply affected by the disappearance of his father's wife. Once he advanced a possible theory—suicide by drowning.

Pressed for his opinion, the sheriff coiled his mustache ends around a stubby thumb, tugged his thought-inducing forelock, and chose his words with studied caution:

"It hain't best to form conclusions, where so many things is possible. She mout 'a' run off, an' then, ag'in, she moutn't. Some o' them lumber camp niggers is bad, an' one of 'em mout'a' got 'er, or Steve may have it figgered right. You never kin tell what a narvous woman'll do, an' it's no use to guess."

"Tell us the truth, sheriff," said Henry Brahmstadt earnestly. "If it turns out that a murder has been committed, do you think there is much chance for the guilty person to be apprehended?"

"Wal, as to that part," replied the sheriff diffidently, "I've been an officer, little an' big, fur thirty-odd year, an' I seem to be sorter lucky-like in workin' out cases."

At dusk Danny brought the horses to the front gate.

With a hand on old Dick's cheekstrap and a foot in stirrup, the sheriff appeared struck by a sudden thought and smiled whimsically back over his shoulder.

"Say, Henry," apologetically, "I know you folks is all tired up, but I hain't had nary bite since mawnin' an' I reckon Danny's 'bout empty, too. If you cud git us just a bite of suthin', to hold us till we git home, we kin eat as we ride, an' much obleeged to you."

Steve procured two mammoth pork sandwiches, and the two officers turned into the woods path, eating avidly as the ponies jogged.

About half way between the Brahmstadt establishment and the highway was an abandoned clearing, and as they debouched on it, the riders saw a negro shuffling toward them, carrying something on his shoulder. He was too far away for identification and evidently chose to remain so, for while still two hundred yards distant he saw the officers, whirled and scurried for the brush with incredible swiftness, dropping the object from his shoulder as he ran.

Action!

Four spurs pricked bronco hide, and two willing ponies lunged to full speed in a stride, but it was of no avail. The flying negro simply faded into the gloaming at the edge of the thicket and, though the officers threshed the brush for a half-hour, their industry produced nothing.

Back on the path, Danny searched for and found the object which the negro had dropped—a mud-encrusted shovel.

The sheriff lashed the implement to his saddle-horn, followed the negro's track along the path for a short distance by aid of his flashlight, then went on to town.

Reaching the office, the sheriff instructed Danny to get a pocket lunch, change horses and go in search of Luke. The latter was to narrow his field of operation, but to work after a more thorough plan. He was to pick up every able-bodied adult negro found within two miles of the Brahmstadt place, no matter who might have an alibi for them.

"Tell Luke he's to bring 'em all in, residents, transients, preachers, crap-shooters, even Foster's tenant and that hired hand at Brahmstadt's. Some o' the whites 'll object, I reckon, but you kin explain that we gotta treat ev'rybody alike. They's a nigger in them woods that I want, an' I'm a-goin' t' git 'im. An', Danny, don't say nothin' to nobody 'bout that there feller with the shovel."

Throughout Thursday night Luke Haskell prodded his sleepy posse to its task and by ten o'clock Friday morning he had completed the round-up to his satisfaction, which means that not a cottontail rabbit in the marked area had remained unnoticed and undisturbed, and not a garter-snake had crossed the Neches unobserved.

The bag was two dozen negroes, six of whom were strays, the remainder residents. Two whites were added to the gang in the district court room where all were kept under deputized guard, pending the sorting-out process.

Still no sleep for Luke.

Having served valiantly as leader of the hunt, Luke now assumed office as master of the grill, his understanding of negro nature, as seen in the South, surpassing that of the sheriff, or of Colson, the county prosecutor, who interposed a dignified query now and then as Luke placed one suspect after another upon the rack of the

inquisition and shook him over the fiery pits of everlasting torment, asking for the truth.

At three P.M. Luke gave up in despair.

"Some bunch this," he grumbled disgustedly, as he stretched across the sheriff's desk without even removing his boots, preparatory to a much-needed nap. "I always knowed that a guilty cotton nigger could look as humble an' mild as an angel's grandmother, an' an innocent nigger'll tell enough lies in five minutes to hang a regiment of 'em, but this bunch has got me about loco.

"To hear 'em tell it they hain't a cussed one of 'em that's been outside his shack fur two-three weeks, an' they hain't but four of 'em that'll admit that they ever saw Beulah Brahmstadt, or heered tell of her. If all the innocent ones would tell the truth, we could soon git this narrowed down to a few, so's we could work on 'em right; but with all of 'em lyin' like a bunch of medicine advertisements its a-goin' to take a week or more to do this sortin' an' brandin'."

 AN HOUR'S rest sufficed to make the hardy Luke fit again. Rousing, he thrust his sleepy head under the spout of the squeaky old pump out on the dusty square, and as Danny worked the handle, spraying his partner into a condition of complete wakefulness, Luke sputtered through the screen of falling water:

"The Ol' Man's got something in his noodle, an' don't you forget it. I knowed it as soon's I saw him a-noddin' at the 'phone that-a-way. He's too durn quiet an' forgetful of what's goin' on about him. He always says that he hain't smart, but that he's plumb lucky havin' fellers that's committed crimes, git foolish an' show him all about it.

"Wal, this time they's been one of us with 'im nearly ev'ry minute, an' we have good eyes. When this thing's cleared up, le's not have to ask 'im how he tumbled to this or why he done that. Here he comes now. If he goes to cuttin' any strange didoes, keep your little think-tank a-workin', an' we'll see if we kain't keep up with 'im this time."

Strange didoes, right off the reel.

The sheriff sent Luke off after a truck, and into it bundled four negroes, whom he had selected from the dusky assemblage in the courthouse. Each of them was large,

and they were somewhat alike in dress and general appearance.

Out on the highway, a few miles from town, the truck was stopped under a wayside tree and the shackled prisoners were detained, guarded by Danny, while the two officers ran the truck down the road for a short distance.

Luke remained on the driver's seat, but the sheriff trudged slowly back to the tree, Danny's light rifle on his shoulder. Arriving there, the sheriff lined up the wondering quartet of blacks on the road and unshackled them. Then he wiped the sweat from his ruddy countenance, handed the rifle to Danny, accepting the six-gun in exchange, and proceeded to lay down the program.

"Boys, do you see that there truck?"

They did.

"Think ye cud run an' git into it, if a feller was about t' shoot ye if ye didn't?"

They honestly believed that they could.

The sheriff turned to Danny.

"Like your job, an' want to keep it?"

Danny certainly did.

"Do jist as I tell ye, 'thout askin' no questions?"

Danny surely would.

"Kill one of them fellers, if I tell ye to?"

Danny hesitated, and indignant protest appeared in his steady eyes, but he remembered "them office rules" and gamely announced that any negro the sheriff should designate was as good as dead.

Bob clapped his deputy heartily on the shoulder and turned to the blacks, whose rolling eyes, gaping mouths and uneasily shuffling feet furnished assurance that they were very much interested in his conversation.

"All of you are 'quainted 'ith Danny Simmons, and two things about him you know right well—he never goes back on his word, and he never misses 'ith a rifle. Onderstandin' that all proper, you kin see that somebody's a-goin' to be up ag'in' it good an' hard, right here in this road. Now stay on the mark till I shoot this here six-gun, then run for the truck like Billy — was atter ye, which it is.

"Here's yer orders, Danny: If one of 'em don't run when I shoot, you shoot 'im; if one of 'em starts to leave the road, shoot 'im. In any case, when the first one teches that there truck, shoot the last one, an' shoot to kill."

Four trembling, ash-hued negroes left the mark like a swirling wind cloud as the sheriff's pistol barked its signal. Danny Simmons, inwardly sick, deathly white in the face, but grimly stanch, grasped the light rifle and waited.

Paddock, the Pacific coast flash, often is referred to as the world's fastest human being, though partisans of Murchison and Duffy are wont to dispute this claim.

That's because no official timers were present on that dusty, hot east Texas highway that summer afternoon when the slowest of four negroes shattered all previous records for the hundred yards. Nine and two-fifths seconds? Shucks!

And, at that, the terror-stricken darky who brought up the rear was a good five yards behind the leader, the largest of the four, who ran with a peculiar, awkward elephantine gait, lumbering, but effective.

As the leader reached goal, Danny drew on the spinal column of the hindmost with a calculating eye and steady hand.

Steel clicked on steel, and that was all.

Half-tamed piny woodsman that he was, Danny whirled on his superior, blazing with hot wrath at having been made to look and feel ridiculous. Then two thoughts registered in his mind simultaneously: The old sheriff never did anything without a purpose; Luke had warned him to look out for didoes.

A dido this was; but, look as they might and did, Luke and Danny shamedly confessed failure with their eyes when they stole furtive looks at each other on the way home, each hoping that enlightenment had come to his partner. Taciturn as ever, the sheriff volunteered nothing by way of explanation. Instead, he "didoed" some more.

Reaching the courthouse, the sheriff ordered all the prisoners released, excepting the winner of the race on the highway, who was double-ironed and placed under day and night guard. The sheriff then rode off home, accompanied by Danny and Luke, who had heartily seconded the sheriff's suggestion that it was "time to get a real feed all around."

At the cottage the Brahmstadt case receded into the background. Ma Forrest's prodigious efforts in the culinary department resulted in a table which creaked beneath the weight of sundry and divers well-cooked dishes of meats, vegetables and pastries,

which were transferred with astounding celerity to four stomachs which appeared capable of withstanding great pressure.

Supper over, pipes were set glowing in the semi-darkness of the cool veranda where belated hummingbirds poised among the honeysuckle blossoms.



AT EIGHT the phone tinkled shrilly through the quiet house, and Ma, busy making beds, clumped ponderously to answer it, but stopped and returned to her work without question when her lord and master drawled an unconcerned—

"Never mind, hon', let 'em ring a while."

Five times the instrument shrilled at intervals of a few minutes before Bob knocked the dottle from his pipe and took down the receiver.

Shamelessly eavesdropping at the dining-room window, Luke and Danny gazed at each other in a veritable agony of bewilderment as the sheriff's casual voice droned out through the opening.

"This is the sheriff a-talkin'. . . . Wal, yes, ye mout say we got a leetle news fur ye; suthin' real important, at that. Ye see, we got a big buck nigger up at the jail who says that he seed Beulah killed by a white man late in the forenoon a-Wednesday. . . .

"Huh? No, he hain't named nobody yit. Says he'll tell all of it when he gits to the prison at Huntsville in the mawnin'. I thought best to send 'im over thar fur safe-keepin', an' besides, he 'pears 'fraid to talk much till he gits to a safe place.

"You see, Brahmstadt, we kain't convict nobody on his evidence 'less we git the body, an' this black feller says he'll tell us whar to find it as soon as he gits to Huntsville. I reckon we'll have it by noon tomorrow. . . . Mighty sorry about Beulah, I shore am. I'll let you know as soon as we find out the rest of it. Good night."

No more restful lethargy at the sheriff's cottage. Everybody snapped into activity. Luke and Danny saddled horses for three at top speed, while the sheriff looted closets for slickers and extra coats, explaining that they might be due for a night in the woods.

Ma came trot-trotting when she saw the horses brought round.

"For the lan's sake! Kain't ye do your stirrin' about in the day time? What in the name o' goodness are ye thinkin' 'bout



to be startin' off at a time when a body ort to be in bed? Leavin' me here, too, helpless an' unprotected, with the hull country excited and 'most anything liable to happen!"

The sheriff patted his good spouse's plump shoulder reassuringly, kissed her generous lips with a resounding smack and eased stiffly into saddle as he called back words of comfort:

"Don't ye be the least mite worried, ma. All the strangers in these 'ere parts is just out o' jail, and ev'rybody thinks I'm at home tonight. We may git back earlier than ye think. We're jist a-goin' down to the ol' mica mine on Neches to git Beulah Brahmstadt's body an' the man that killed 'er."

There was conversation by the way, as the horses *scuff-scuffed* over the three miles of dusty highway which separated the sheriff's home from the river bank where the old mica working lay.

Luke Haskell didn't propose to be in a position where he would have to ask questions when the final show-down came. His mind bore a very positive theory, and he craved to air it. Easing up elbow to elbow with the sheriff, he threw out a tentative feeler.

"Pretty plain case now, eh?"

"Wal, yes, tol'bly so."

"S'pose he knows we know he killed 'er?"

There was mild surprize tinged with eager curiosity in the old officer's voice.

"Why, Luke! Do ye know who done it?"

Tamped chock-full of wise deductions, Luke unhesitatingly committed himself—

"Sure I know who done it; you know, too, an' so does Danny."

"S-o-o?"

Luke was nettled, much nettled. Just because he had been something of a dullard in the past failed to justify the assumption that he never would learn to read cards which lay face-up. Ordinarily modest, and duly respectful of the opinion of his superior, Luke now took to open bluster.

"Know it? Why, of course we know it! What's the use o' whisperin' under the covers, when we're all by ourselves? Here!"

Luke produced a used envelope and with a stub pencil scrawled something on it, making the letters big on account of the gloom. Folding it, after having allowed Danny to read, he handed it to the sheriff.

"Put that in your pocket an' read it

after the show-down. Bet ye a chicken dinner for the three of us that I've writ the right feller's name. What say?"

"She's a bet," replied the sheriff laconically, as he turned Old Dick off the highway, and dismounted his force for the half-mile tramp along the river bank.



THE abandoned mica mine was tucked snugly between the normal bank of the Neches and a moderate bluff which had confined the river in prehistoric days when waters were big. The mica, outcropping from the bluff, slightly above the water level, had been mined in desultory fashion by the country folk.

Though referred to generally as a pit, the place really was a large oval basin which stretched parallel with the channel for several hundred yards; in it were dozens of minor cavities, each a separate working. Slanting down to the various well-like workings were dozens of wagon trails, some comparatively new, some almost obliterated by time.

Now the entire working lay abandoned, and each flood deposited in it a layer of silt, which, with erosion from the bluff, was rapidly assisting Nature to obliterate the ugly scars wrought by Man. Between pit and river was a strip of thicket in which the officers took station and settled for their silent vigil.

Ten o'clock.

A man bearing pick and shovel, followed by two others carrying a pole-and-blanket litter, emerged from the woodland trail, descended a wagon track and disappeared into one of the older workings.

Creeping silently to a point opposite their unsuspecting quarry, the officers disposed themselves at the thicket edge, where they listened for a time to the low hum of voices in the pit, mingled with the sound of pick and shovel at work.

The sheriff's first object had been accomplished. There without doubt was the body of the murdered woman, and to it had been lured three men who had guilty knowledge of the crime.

The sheriff rose and hailed—

"Hallo down thar!"

No answer.

"Ye mout as well come out peaceable, fellers. We got the drop, an' they hain't a chanst in the world fur ye to make a git-away."

Echoing along the waters, the sheriff's voice rolled eerily back from the opposite bluff, but there was no answering call from the pit.

Then, and for the first time, it dawned upon the men at the thicket-edge that everything was not in their favor.

True, the men below were nicely pocketed for the time being. To ascend the slope lying bright in the moonlight, and covered by keen marksmen, would be suicidal. But the moon would pass the rim of the bluff in another hour, and, with the slope unlighted, escape by any one of the many wagon trails would be an easy matter.

The same consideration which deterred the ghouls from coming out, prevented the officers from closing in. The slope was an impassable barrier, so long as moonlight lasted. Also, while the officers could command a clear view of the pit as a whole, the little cavity within it was little more than a dark splotch effectually concealing those known to be within it.

Another adverse circumstance was that, while the men in the pit had a model refuge against the gun-fire, the fringe of bushes in which the officers lay served only as a screen obstructing the enemy's view, but offering no real protection.

Having considered all aspects of the case, the sheriff ordered a volley fired into the face of the bluff, just above the little pit. Immediately there was an answering fusillade which cut twigs about the officer's faces, affording sufficient proof that there was to be no surrender.

More firing from the thicket, at first intermittent, then in a continuous snapping, hissing blast which drilled into the pit, searching for human flesh.

And below, shot for shot, came an answering crash of nitro and hum of bullets.

Squirming over on his left hip to refill the cylinder of his six-gun, Luke looked savagely at Danny Simmons and spoke with some asperity:

"What's the matter 'ith ye? Why hain't ye shootin'?"

Continuing to peer over the rim of a small rock, behind which he had taken station, the beloved little rifle still cool in his steady hands, Danny answered ingenuously—

"What's the use o' shootin' 'less ye hit suthin'?"

On the other side of Luke, the sheriff

heard, chuckled softly and held his fire, just as Luke drew in his breath with a sharp hiss and commenced to swear vociferously.

"I got mine ag'in! Plumb through the right arm this time. Gittin' the habit, I reckon. Nine weeks in the hospital an' nine out 'pears to form my regular mode o' livin'. Blast the cussed luck, it seems like my body's magnetized to attract steel-jacketed pills!"

Leaving Danny to keep the slope, the sheriff drew Luke back from the zone of fire and made a hasty examination which proved that no bones were broken, though blood was flowing profusely. The sheriff knotted his necktie over a handkerchief compress and with a twig twisted it tight, stopping the flow.

Luke gamely shifted his gun to his left hand and returned to the skirmish-line, but all three knew him to be strictly a right-hand gunman, so for all practical purposes it was a case of three against two, with the minutes slipping steadily by and darkness soon to offer easy escape—that is, after the men in the pit had killed Bob Forrest and Luke Haskell and Danny Simmons, for no man on either side doubted that as a last resort the sheriff would tackle the slope.

Meanwhile it appeared to be a case of stalemate. To the sheriff's worried mind it was evident that the opposing forces were certain to remain as they were until the final rush in that last minute of moonlight, with the advantage all with the other side.

But Danny Simmons was a woods strategist above par, a fact which the sheriff remembered with satisfaction when he sensed the absence of the junior deputy from his side.

Where Danny had gone, the sheriff could not guess. Two things he did know with certainty: Danny Simmons hadn't deserted, and whatever action he had taken would prove to have been based upon cool, deliberate calculation. Whether a success or a failure, it would be the very best that Danny Simmons could do under existing conditions, and as a usual thing Danny's best was plenty good enough.

Enlightenment as to Danny's plan was not long in coming.

Holding their fire, the sheriff and Luke were watching the slope impatiently, when a volley crashed from the gloom below.

Like an answering echo came the spiteful snap of Danny's little rifle, from behind, and some distance down stream. There was a commotion in the little pit, then near silence, broken only by the continuous groaning of a strong man in agony.

Disregarding his own safety, Bob jumped to his feet, swung his battered Stetson and shouted jubilantly—

"That's the boy, Danny! That's the boy! He's got 'em, Luke!

"He's done cooned up that big gum a couple a-hundred yards down stream! It's long shootin' in this light, but, shucks, what's that to Danny Simmons?"

Fully exposed to the enemy's fire, the old officer shook a defiant fist and pronounced sentence:

"Yes, ye woman-killers, ye kin lay coiled up thar, a-waitin' to slip into the woods when dark comes, like so many moccasins slidin' into a drift, but ye'll never do it! The moon's a-goin' to slide over that bluff in a few minutes, but just before she goes, she's a-goin' to shine right down on you fellers fur a little spell. Better come out an' surrender while ye kin!"

Five minutes of silence and inactivity. Then the relentless little rifle spoke again in the tree-top.

Almost immediately Henry Brahmstadt stepped into the moonlight with hands held high, his big voice dull and hopeless, eloquent of the misery within him.

"Come on down. Ed's dead, and Fred's dying. I don't care what happens to me now."

Busily engaged in handcuffing his prisoner, the sheriff asked suddenly—

"Whar's yer t'other boy?"

"He's home and in bed. Stevie's not in this."

 SCARCELY a breakfast table in the little county seat town was cleared properly on the morning it became known that Beulah Brahmstadt's body had been recovered, and that Henry was in jail waiting for the grand jury to convene.

Dishes went unwashed, floors unswept. Unmilked cows bawled disconsolately over barnlot fences, and stores remained locked. Seminole County was flowing toward the courthouse from all directions. Milling excitedly, breeding and killing rumors, the ever increasing crowds became at once a

nuisance and a menace—so much so that Luke Haskell, as chief deputy, saw fit to clear the wing in which the jail and the sheriff's quarters were located.

Both deputies had appeared for duty unusually early, but, though it was long past his regular hour, Bob Forrest had not put in an appearance.

In the office, Prosecutor Colson and Luke had Brahmstadt between them, applying every method known to their science, short of outright physical torture, in an effort to secure a confession. Colson, whose sleek, well-groomed person appeared much out of place in the dusty old office, searched his fertile brain in quest of additional arguments with which to break the prisoner's sullen determination to remain silent.

Luke, grim, stalking emblem of vengeance, nursed his bandaged arm across his breast as a mother cuddles her babe, cursing volubly in an effort to score a triumph by intimidation where Colson's eloquence had failed. For a part of the time Luke and Colson performed as separate soloists; then their voices swelled in unison, but in different keys.

Through it all Brahmstadt sat mute, immobile, his dull, gloomy countenance fixed in a sullen stare, as immune to the suave pleading of the handsome, magnetic lawyer as he was to the menace which bristled in Luke's voice and manner.

Every human emotion has a limit, Colson's patience among other things. Finding argument unavailing, the exasperated prosecutor shook a mighty fist in Brahmstadt's heavy face and bellowed in exasperation:

"All right, you dirty murderer! Just the same you killed that poor litle woman, and you'll hang for it as sure as law is law. We know every step of this crime, and we'll make a case that will convince any jury in five minutes' time. You big——"

Colson broke off suddenly as the sheriff's squat figure appeared in the doorway, where he paused to take stock of the situation before him, blinking gravely as was his habit when considering some weighty question. There was a touch of mild reproach in his eyes, which was reflected in his voice as he said:

"I wouldn't do that, Colson; I shore wouldn't. Of co'se it's all right to ask questions, but it don't look jist right to call names at a feller who has his hands



fastened. I wish you wouldn't do that—leastwise, not here in my office."

The sheriff lowered himself into the armchair and jerked his head toward the prisoner.

"Better take 'im down stairs, Danny. He hain't ready to talk yit, an' besides, we know about all we need to about this case, don't we?"

Colson, his good-natured face all smiles, clapped the sheriff on the shoulder with brotherly affection and answered with friendly raillery:

"You bet we do, Bob, and this is one time that we know about as much as you do. One or two little things are not entirely clear to me yet, and Luke and Danny disagree as to where you got a few of your hunches, but taking it all in all, I think we're improving. Anyway we don't have to ask the usual number of questions and then feel silly when you answer them."

"Bully fur you all!" said the sheriff heartily as he rose. "An' now I gotta do a little runnin' roun'. I'm short o' sleep, an' almost forgot it."

"No you don't!" interposed Colson hastily. "You're going to sit right there and start at the beginning and tell us every move you made, and why you made it. As I said before, we've kept pretty close to you, but are puzzled over a few details. Come on now and unload; it ought to be a relief."

"Reckon I kin spare ye a few minutes," said the sheriff, smiling whimsically as he tamped his blackened corn-cob full of "Green Toad" with tender care, lighted it in a workmanlike manner and settled back for the usual confessional.

"Wait just a minute till I do a little phonin'," said Luke suddenly, and a moment later his voice sounded from the hall, ostentatiously loud.

"Blake's café? . . . This's the sheriff's office, Haskell talkin'. Bob an' Colson an' Simmons an' me'll be over at six, an' we want ye to git us up a mighty nice chicken dinner. . . . Pick out a nice fat chicken fur each one of us, an' we want ye to wire Jacksonville an' have 'em send down some lobster an' fish by express. . . . Have plenty of everything, and don't pay no 'tention to expenses. This feed's on a feller who never lost a bet afore in his life."

Luke came back in accompanied by Danny, who had just returned from down

stairs. Both were grinning broadly and, catching a glimpse of the situation, Colson roared delightedly.

Apparently oblivious to the merriment created at his expense, the sheriff brushed a few stray crumbs of tobacco off his vest and commenced at the beginning:

"Fust thing that struck me as bein' queer was that notice in the paper. Beulah was supposed to 'a' left late a-Tuesday, and here comes Brahmstadt at noon a-Wednesday warnin' people not to trust 'er 'fore he knows whether she intends to stay in this county or go some'ers else. Not much to go on, to be sure, but 't wa'n't quite natural. Sorter like makin' a defense before you been accused of nothin'. The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth, you know.

"You take the paper, so I s'pose ye noticed that too, didn't ye, Colson?"

"Br-r-mp!" said Colson. "Yes, I—that is—" Then, noticing that Luke and Danny were prodding each other's ribs and chuckling knowingly, the prosecutor came clean:

"No I didn't, you confounded old duffer! That's one place you put it over all of us."

"Wal," continued Bob, "that didn't 'mount to a hull lot no way, but when Mary Foster told me that Beulah'd taken the pitcher o' yeast an' started fur home through the woods, I was purty sure that she meant to go back. Folks as is runnin' off don't tote no pitchers along 'ith 'em, an' I took particular pains to l'arn that Beulah didn't throw no pitcher away nowhars along that path, which she'd 'a' done if she'd suddenly decided not to go back.

"Of co'se, knowin' that Beulah started fur home an' knowin' that she got thar was two dif'runt things. That was whar my fust big streak o' luck come in. Danny was with me when I foun' out about that. He kin tell ye 'bout it."

Colson and Luke turned inquiringly to Danny, whose sheepish grin was sufficient acknowledgment of his inability to explain.

Luke and the lawyer roared in unison, and the sheriff looked disappointed.

"So? Why, kain't ye see? Beulah went attar that there yeast late a-Tuesday, an' Thursday evenin' Brahmstadt fed us light bread which was good an' fresh, which it never would 'a' been if it'd been left over from the precedin' Satiddy.

"Women that bakes light bread sets their sponge at night, kneads the dough attar breakfast the next mawnin' and bakes

it 'long about noon. The Brahmstadts were early birds, an' I figgered Beulah finished her bakin' bout ten or ha'-past. It was jist noon when Brahmstadt phoned the newspaper office that she had done run off, so it was plain enough that whatever had happened to 'er took place late a-Wednesday forenoon.

"Nother big piece of luck was when we met that nigger carryin' the shovel 'at had the leetle specks o' mica dust on it. I turned it over to Luke fur safekeepin', so I s'pose he saw it an' told the rest of ye."

Danny and Colson did the laughing.

"Co'se all of ye know why I raced them niggers. I was sartin that nigger with the shovel could outrun any in the country, an' that I'd know 'im if I ever saw him run again. That's why I put Danny behin' 'im 'ith a rifle. There's only one real runnin' nigger, an' that's a skeered one.

"I knowed he hadn't killed Beulah, because if he had Brahmstadt never 'ud 'a' done all that lyin' to shield 'im; but I was pretty sartin that he had gone to bury the body a-Wednesday night an' had laid up in the woods all day, waitin' fur dark.

"I reckoned that he'd strayed over from that loggin' camp where he'd been a-workin' an' got to Brahmstadt's jist in time to see the killin' so they hired 'im to keep quiet about it. One or more of 'em must 've been to the buryin' 'ith him or they wouldn't hev knowed how to find the body so soon. When I turned them other fellers out an' kep' this buck in jail, I knowed Brahmstadt would git uneasy an' commence askin' questions, so I——"

"Aw, that's plain enough," interrupted Luke with a wise air. "That's the reason why I made that little bet that I could name the man."

Here Colson, who had been watching the sheriff keenly for some minutes past, suddenly spread his legs, placed a hand on either knee, leaned over for a long, searching scrutiny of the officer's bland countenance and burst out:

"You infernal old wampus! I honestly

believe that you are holding something back on us."

"Whadda ye mean? Jist some o' them triflin' little details that you fellers has overlooked? Wal, they mout be one or two at that. Wait jist a minute. This case hez taken a lot o' phonin' an' I got to do it one more time. 'Pears like I've told all I know, but I'll be right back, an' then we'll see."



AGAIN they heard him in the hall "This the Johnson Undertakin' Company? . . . This's the sheriff a-talkin'. I wish ye'd send yer wagon down to the Brahmstadt place an' git Steve's body. . . . Uh-huh. I went over thar this mawnin' to git 'im for killin' Beulah 'cause she wouldn't leave 'is dad an' run off 'ith him, but he done shot hisself when I sot foot on the po'ch. . . .

"What say? . . . How'd I know he done it? Why he lived long enough to tell me so, but I was sartin of it already, 'cause I knowed them Brahmstadts was a superstitious lot, an' he was the only one of 'em that'd rather have us find Beulah's body than to go down in a dark pit at night an' handle it."

There was silence in the little office, none of the three there being quite sure whose turn it was to laugh, or who was due to be laughed at.

Twisting his mouth as he worked, the sheriff turned the dial and got another connection, opening a conversation with grave earnestness:

"Blake's café? . . . Bob Forrest talkin' . . . Say, 'bout that leetle supper tonight. . . . Be shore to set out plenty of olives, an' celery, an' pickles, an' fruit, an' any other sich fixin's ye can find. Git some cut flowers, too, an' do everything to dress 'er up jist right. . . .

"Ye see, I hev to tell ye 'bout these things, 'cause the feller that's a-goin' to have the price of this feed taken out of his pay check is a pow'ful hand fur important dishes, but he don't know nothin' whatever 'bout leetle details."



# THE CATERPILLAR TRACTOR

by John L. Chamberlain

## I

**I**N EVERY war that has been fought  
By brave and sturdy sons,  
There's many guys that's wrote about  
The beasts that haul the guns.  
The mule and horse has had their share,  
The elephant has, too,  
But there's one beast they never praise,  
And that's because he's new.  
He's the caterpillar tractor,  
The good ol' ploddin' tractor,  
Plowin' through the soggy slime, belly deep in mud;  
Snortin', pantin', gaspin', creepin',  
Never quittin', never sleepin',  
Sweatin' greasy blood.

## II

He hauls the heavy pieces  
Into place for the attack;  
The great, gray steel volcanoes,  
That would break a horse's back.  
He hauls 'em over mountain ridge,  
And over shell-holed plain,  
And, if we gets the orders,  
He'll haul 'em back again.  
He's the caterpillar tractor,  
The roarin', sobbin' tractor;  
He's the king o' beasts o' burden when it comes to doin' work;  
You feed him with a nozzle and you open up the throttle,  
And he jumps into his harness with a jerk.

## III

O' course, he has his sickness  
Like every other beast;  
Perhaps he's fouled his spark plugs,  
Or his bearin' must be greased.  
But if he gets his proper care  
And doesn't get neglected,  
He'll do his job, and do it well,  
And that's why he's respected.  
He's the caterpillar tractor,  
The steady, ploddin' tractor,  
He's never known the meanin' yet o' quit.  
He'll pull the pieces forward till you're ready to unlimber,  
I tells you, men, the tractor does his bit.





# Swain's Outlawing

## A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

### by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Swain Kingsbane," "Swain's Payment," etc.

**T**HE Nidaros folk\* stood sullenly aloof as the column clanked by, although many men would have traveled far to witness such a spectacle. The air was bitter cold with the first chill of winter, and the light was hard and gray, a light that made the house roofs stand up against the sky as if they were drawn upon it in fresh scrivener's ink; along the strand the vessels' masts were a bristle of black spear-shafts above the straggling line of warehouses and wharves.

The folk in the street that led up to the borg looked sidewise at the serried ranks of mailed housecarls who followed King Ingi and the little knot of chiefs on horseback. Boys and girls tore up and down the line in rapture, and occasional women stood in the house doors or hung from windows to stare; but such men as were abroad either turned in to side streets or scowled or tried to seem incurious.

Two voices raised in argument reached the ears of the King's escort as they passed a tavern.

"After all, they are tall men and proper."

"Tall and proper! Yes, and they serve a crippled King."

"Crippled, yes; but no man will deny he can bear himself as bravely——"

\*Nidaros was the modern Throndhjem.

"Ho, why not? When he has the strongest train? But of what use to argue, carl? I would grant much if he were not so cursed overbearing. And it is well said that he slew King Sigurd, his brother——"

"Not so, it was Swain Olaf's son——"

"Bah! The Orkneyman slew Sigurd on Ingi's account! And Sigurd was crying for peace when the sword bit home. But Ingi coveted his lands and——"

The voice died behind them, swallowed up in the beat of hoofs, the stamp of feet, the rattle and clang of armor.

King Ingi flushed and shifted uneasily in his saddle, glancing down at his misshapened foot in its shortened stirrup, acutely conscious of the hump that bulged on his back beneath his mail-shirt.

"Say the word, King, and I will turn out that rat's nest, and give it to the flames," growled a tall, ruddy-bearded man who rode at his right hand.

Swain Olaf's son was this man's name, a viking-farer and adventurer from the Orkneys, who had risen to great influence in troubled Norway. Men said that it was to him more than to any other Ingi owed it that the King had been able to triumph over physical disabilities and establish his authority in the land. With Swain's counsel to guide his policies, with Swain's strong

arm to deal blows for him, with Swain's wily brain continually on the alert to thwart the intrigues of his enemies, King Ingi had succeeded in one short year in regaining the power which his two brothers, King Sigurd and King Eystein, had won from him. And thanks to Swain, also, he had lured Sigurd into a conflict in Bergen town in which his forces had been entirely successful and Sigurd had met death at Swain's hands—by reason of which fact men called Swain, Kingsbane.

"Yes, yes, Lord King," spoke up the chief who rode on Ingi's left. "Let us read these carls a lesson. They grow impudent."

This chief was nigh as tall as Swain, and of a noble, open countenance, impetuous withal. But he differed from Swain in his apparel, for where the Orkneyman was wrapped in an old, torn cloak and wore salt-stained armor and rusted helm, he had on a handsome, scarlet cloak, fur-trimmed; his mail was silvered, and his helm and shield were gilt. He was Gregorius Dag's son by name, and of all the lendemen (barons) in Norway there were not more than two or three as wealthy as he. He was a very honorable man, and well thought of.

It should be said that these two chiefs shared with one other the principal power under King Ingi. The third was Erling, Kyrpinga Orm's son, who was called Skakki (Wrynecked) because of an old wound which made him carry his head on one side. Erling had wedded the Princess Kristin, daughter to King Sigurd the \*Jorsalafarer and it was through him that Swain had been induced to come to Norway and assist Ingi against Sigurd and Eystein. Erling, at this day of Ingi's return to Nidaros, was absent, having been summoned to his estate at Studla in Etne, where his wife was brought to bed of a son, by whom he set great store, for he believed that in days to come it might happen that he should be acclaimed the father of a King.

King Ingi shook his head as Gregorius spoke.

"No, no," he said. "You well know, both of you, that however we be tempted it will gain us nothing to slay or burn the Nidaros folk. This was of old Sigurd's town, and the people still hold him in their memories, and resent it that I am lord over them."

"And being lord," cried Gregorius, "it is right that you should——"

"The King talks sense," rasped Swain in his rumbling voice that was much like the growl of a bear. "Moreover, when common men talk as that pair in the tavern did, within our hearing, it may be believed that greater men have spurred them on. It is not by accident that the folk all over the land have turned against us more and more since summer waned."

"We have been too easy with them," scowled Gregorius.

"Easy or not, I do not understand," said the King, puzzled.

His face had gone white again after the one flush of color the remarks of the tavern talkers had drawn to his cheeks, cheeks that were pallid with the pallor of one who has known a lifetime of illness. It was well said of Ingi in later times that his trouble was that his twisted body had contained the lion heart of a warrior, and in him always raged the battle between a spirit of steel, a will that denied fear, and flesh that quivered under weariness and pain.

"Look you, friends," he continued. "After Sigurd's death when we came here the folk all along the way came out and cheered us, and if there was sullenness it was kept under cover. The merchants were friendly and paid taxes promptly; the *bondi* (farmers) were loyal and offered service to uphold my rights; the lendemen were blithe to attend my court. But now all my new friends turn their backs, and even some of those who stayed by me when I was one of three Kings, instead of the strongest of two, no longer——"

"Would you hear truth, King?" interrupted Swain brusquely.

Ingi's face twitched in an involuntary smile.

"I never heard anything else from you, Swain; but if you preface it so it must be unpalatable."

"Palatable or bitter, it is truth," rejoined Swain. "As I have told you often in the past, the lendemen are behind the dissatisfaction in these parts."

"The men of wealth and property are always behind any public movement," acknowledged the King. "But that is not news, Swain."

"Perhaps not, but what I say now is—to you. The lendemen have turned from you for two reasons. First, because in dividing Sigurd's property you shared it only amongst those who aided you to overcome him."

\*Jerusalemfarer, i. e., Crusader.

"Would you have had it otherwise?" exclaimed the King.

And Gregorius barked:

"It is not like you to talk so, Swain. What? Will you haggle because the King was faithful, and rewarded those who were faithful to him? I did not hear you raise your objections when the spoil was being divided."

"Peace, peace," adjured Swain. "I do not deny what you say, Gregorius, and to the King I say that I would not have it otherwise. Yet a fact is a fact, and it is nonetheless a fact because it is unpalatable, as the King says."

Gregorius nodded unwillingly, and King Ingi said:

"I do not seek to deny that, Swain; but what is to be done about it?"

"We can only keep our tempers, even as you kept yours a moment since when those curs in the tavern barked within your hearing, and do whatever chance permits us to win back the disaffected."

"You said there were two reasons of discontent against us," the King reminded him.

"The second is that you do not take the advice of any of the principal chiefs, except Gregorius, Erling and myself."

The King shrugged his shoulders.

"If I listened to all of them——"

"You would get nowhere, King. But how if you made pretense to? You have not held a *Thing* since that at Bergen in which we tricked Sigurd to declare himself, so that he turned the *Thingfolk* against him and no man was willing to lift a hand to save him when at last we attacked him. Would it not be better to hold other *Things*, and give the people an opportunity to talk away some of their ill-humor, rather than to get ourselves into a position such as Sigurd bungled into, and so make it all the easier for Eystein to rid himself of you?"

They had ridden up from the streets of the town onto the slopes of the hill which was crowned by the royal borg, and below them now was spread out the vista of the surrounding countryside. King Ingi frowned at a merchantship which was sailing up the fjord.

"I cannot deny what you say, Swain," he answered. "At the same time, allowing for it, I still do not see why Eystein, who was illegitimate by birth, who all men say is close-fisted and niggardly by nature, should be able to pry men from me."

Swain had followed the King's glance.

"Do you see that ship?" he answered. "The Norsefolk have always followed the sea. They respect any wealthy man or King who performs honorable feats overseas, and it is undeniable that Eystein had been very successful upon several viking voyages. It tickles the fancy of the young men especially to have a viking king. But I am bound to say that I think there is something more than Eystein's reputation as a viking-farer responsible for the way men have gone over to him recently."

"What?" demanded the King and Gregorius together.

Swain chewed his beard.

"I have only suspicions," he answered finally. "Bide, I pray you until— The fact is, I sent the two scalds, Oddi and Armod, south to Viken some weeks ago to spy out what was doing at Eystein's Court, and——"

"I wondered what had become of them!" exclaimed Gregorius.

"It was not wise to put them in such danger, Swain," rebuked Ingi. "They are widely known as your men and my servants, and——"

"They are also scalds, and the most famous pair in the North lands, at that," returned Swain easily. "They have friends at every court, and I do not believe that Eystein, whatever else he might do to harm us, would dare to lift a finger against them. Also, he will regard their presence as a means to inquire regarding our plans. I instructed them to talk freely, particularly when they were drunk."

Both the King and Gregorius chuckled.

"This is an undertaking after their hearts," said the King.

"When should they return?" asked Gregorius.

"It was in my mind that they might be in that merchantship which is working up to the strand," replied Swain. "I bade them make endeavor to get free from Eystein in time to meet us here when you shifted your court from Bergen, and they would have allowed themselves a sufficiency of time, for Eystein keeps court wherever his longships happen to beach, and they could not know in advance where he would carry them."

"He might not have suffered them to go," suggested the King.

"You may leave that to Armod and



Oddi," answered Swain confidently. "I should not care, myself, to have the restraining of them."

King Ingi sighed.

"It will be good to welcome them back," he said. "I miss Erling, albeit he is not what can be called lively company, any more than either of you two. Hutatut! My life is a restless one. I thought I should be content if I had the respect of the Norsefolk. But no! Having that, I desired more power. So I thought I should be satisfied if I might conquer Sigurd and share the land with one brother instead of two. Well, you and Gregorius, Swain, first conquered Sigurd and then slew him, and more of the folk accepted my rule; but I am more uneasy than ever, and despite that I have more vassals and greater wealth and a longer train of courtmen and housecarls, I do not believe I am much safer on the throne."

"No King will be safe on the throne in Norway until he is the only King," retorted Swain.

"If then," amended Gregorius.

"Yes, if then," assented Swain. "He who rises to power must be nimble and tireless to guard it, and there will never lack for men to envy him and seek to wrest it from him."

"I can see that I shall be hard put to it to keep what I have won," said the King wearily.

"You will not keep it unless you extend it," returned Swain.

"Yes," said Gregorius. "To hold power you must increase it. Life is a snowball. Once you have begun it you must keep rolling it steadily bigger and bigger or it will melt under your hand."

"And it is more than that," added Swain. "No man can win always. Half of the trick of success is in knowing when to admit that you must yield an advantage, yet contriving that it shall do your opponent as little good as possible."

King Ingi regarded him curiously.

"Have you ever known failure, Swain?" he asked. "I thought you had ridden rough-shod over all who came in your way."

"Soon or late, I have bested every man who opposed me," replied Swain simply. "But I have known defeat. I have ever known outlawry—and perhaps I shall know it again. Moreover, the principal object of my life, as you must know, has been the slaying of Olvir Rosta (Roysterer) who slew

my father and mother and my two brothers. Him I have pursued relentlessly; I burned his grandmother, Frakork the Witch; I drove him from the Orkneyar; I drove him from Mikligard, when he took service under the Greek Emperor; I thought I had slain him a few months back when Oddi and I went as spies to watch the meeting wherein Sigurd and Eystein sought to join their forces to fall on you, but it is a sign of the power which protects him—whether it be Frakork's magic or not—that the blow I dealt at his head did no more than break his arm.

"I am not a man who misses many blows, but I have always missed Olvir. Yet I am sure that in the long run I shall slay him."

"I should not care to stand in Olvir's shoes," said the King.

"He is not like to live long," agreed Gregorius.

"That is to be seen," said Swain grimly.

And it proves how uncertain is fate that many years were to pass before Swain was the bane of Olvir in their last great fight under Torfa Jokul in Iceland, and met, himself, that strange death which men spoke of, shuddering, as "Swain's End," and long before those years had elapsed both King Ingi and Gregorius had completed the tale of their lives.

Swain turned in his saddle as he spoke and gazed back along the line of their column. Behind the chiefs tramped the King's personal guards in their crimson cloaks; next, marched Gregorius' housecarls, all armed alike; last, were Swain's Orkneymen, rough viking-farers, with dinted, scarred mail, even like their chief's, but such warriors as no other leader in Norway could boast.

"Well, come what may," growled Swain, "we shall keep you safe this winter, King. Nidaros is safer than Bergen, and with the company we have here you could hold the borg until Heimdal blows the Gjallarhorn for Ragnarok."



IN THE hall of Nidaros borg the torches flared redly, and all along the line of hearths down the middle fires tossed their yellow flames at the shadows that flowed and shifted across the rush-strewn floor. The long tables were chockablock with housecarls, for King Ingi had a full purse these days and could afford

an establishment out of proportion with his former means; but on the dais only Swain and Gregorius sat with the King, so few were the chiefs who attended him. Other worthy and honorable men were of his company, but none whose eminence justified a seat at the high table.

Some thought of this was in the King's mind as he held out his mead-cup for a thrall to fill.

"It is too cold a night for ale," he said, shivering. "And the Saints know we have no great cause for merriment. A small company of us, friends, and an oppressed."

Swain did not answer, for the Orkneyman was not accustomed to adjusting his mood to any man's, King or common. But Gregorius roused by an effort from the gloom which had enveloped him.

"For my dulness I crave your mercy, Lord King," quoth the lenderman. "It is passing uncomfortable to myself, I assure you. But if we have no spur to merriment, yet have we no cause to be downcast."

"I think otherwise when I look upon the vacant places beside me," answered Ingi. "It was not so in Bergen a few short months past."

"He who is rich can have friends for the asking," said Gregorius. "You have only to clink your gold to get them back again."

"Bah! I want no such friends or servants," rasped the King. "I will cow them, trick them, if need be, but buy them—never! But a laugh, a jest, ah, that is a different matter. For one smile even I——"

Men stirred at the tables by the entrance door, and a babble of voices drifted in through the leather curtains that the guards on duty were thrusting aside with their spear shafts.

"We are to have visitors, it seems," remarked the King, breaking off his complaint.

"Yes," growled Swain, "and I think you are in the way to have that laugh you spoke of."

The King turned to Swain, bewildered.

"That laugh," he repeated. "Why, how——"

"I heard a certain voice," said Swain. "Ho, here he comes!"

A short, lean, little man appeared in the entrance door under the lifted curtains which were draped over his head from the guards' spears almost like folded wings; the guards, themselves, were grinning de-

lightedly, and peering curiously after him as he hesitated on the hall's thresholds. And the first glimpse of his brown, quirky, perky-nosed face and dancing eyes drew a full-throated laugh from the nearest housecarls at the long tables.

"Oddi!" was the cry.

And other men took it up and repeated it, so that it ran the length and breadth of the hall.

"It is Oddi the Little!"

"Ho, carls, Oddi is here!"

"Yes, yes, it is the Little One!"

King Ingi pulled his twisted body erect by the arms of his chair and braced himself on Gregorius's shoulder. The gloom was gone from his own features as if a flood of some magic fluid had washed over him.

"Why, Oddi," he cried. "Welcome, scald! Thrice welcome. Swain was saying an hour gone, as we climbed to the borg, that you might be on the merchantship we sighted beating up-Fjord on the verge of dusk."

"And so I was, Lord King," called Oddi, pulling his face into such a grimace that it seemed a merry mask.

And men laughed just as if what he had said had been vastly funny, and they continued laughing and calling jests to him and laughing more uproariously than ever when he answered them, as he walked up the hall between the tables.

"And thereon hangs a tale," he went on when he had reached the open space at the foot of the dais. "Yes, a tale which is not so funny as these carls seem to think I am."

At which the housecarls roared anew. All Oddi had ever to do to rouse their mirth was to speak or look at them, with his features tumbling together and intertwining and rolling asunder again, and his eyes sparkling and twinkling the while.

"But where is Armod?" asked Swain.

Oddi waved a casual hand to the Orkneyman in a way that no other man—no, not King Ingi, himself—might have attempted, and lived.

"Bide, bide," he said. "It is all part of the story."

"Is he with you?"

"He is wherever Eystein plays at being King. It is a part of the tale, I tell you."

"Come up here," commanded King Ingi abruptly. "And tell us. It may be your news is urgent."

"So is my thirst," retorted Oddi, and

those within hearing rocked with laughter.

"Here is my cup," said the King, and gave it to him.

"Aaa-aah!" exclaimed Oddi, tilting back his head.

The housecarls howled.

"Come, come," growled Swain. "We shall never put two thoughts together in this din."

"The hall is no place for counsel," assented Gregorius. "Let us go to your private chamber, lord."

Ingi unslung his sword from the back of his chair, and using it as a crutch after his wont, hobbled from the table.

"We will do as you suggest, Gregorius," he answered. "Ho, varlets—" this to the serving folk—"fetch Oddi a meal to my chamber. The lash for you if there is delay!"

Oddi turned his head, and gave the hall a last look at his jovial mask, as he ascended the dais.

"Your pardon, carls," he said. "The King goes to eat with me."

The rafters shook with their mirth as he passed through a doorway behind the high table after the King and the two chiefs. Swain clutched him roughly by the arm.

"What madcap tricks are these?" snapped the Orkneyman. "Do you think you are a troll that you spatter us with this *dvergema!*?"\*

Oddi's seamed brown features showed serious in the scant torchlight that illumined the passage they stood in.

"I played the fool for a purpose, Swain," he answered. "I would not have had you question me before all those folk. My news is for few ears, and those not matched by clacking tongues."

The King gave the scald a warm look of approval.

"It is not necessary for you to apologize, Oddi," he said. "I knew you had a reason for your conduct. Is all well with Armod?"

"All except the company he must keep," returned Oddi.

And as they entered the King's chamber he expelled a grunt of relief.

"Each time Swain sends or drags me into one of these dangerous errands," he said, "I promise myself I will have no more to do with him. But I suppose he has worse terrors in store for me than I have yet known. Well, to my tale."

\*Dwarftalk.

Ingi sank into one of the chairs and motioned the others to seats.

"Terrors?" repeated the King.

"Not terrors, perhaps," admitted Oddi. "But discomfort, at any rate. It was this way, lord. Swain sent Oddi and me south while we were all at Bergen, with instructions to comb the Vikenside and learn what we might of Eystein's plans, and if possible, get to the Bastard, himself. We were to say to all who questioned us that we had chafed under Swain's high-handed rule and were loath to continue serving a crippled King who must rely upon others to fight his battles."

Ingi's eyes snapped.

"It was a tale well disposed for popular consumption," he shrilled.

"Granted, lord," agreed Oddi. "It had to be. But we——"

He shut his mouth as a knock sounded on the door, and in response to the King's summons a file of serving-varlets carried in a small table and spread it with dishes before the scald.

"Ha, this is good fare," he exclaimed between grinding teeth when the door had closed again. "But I was telling of how Armod and I journeyed for the Vikenside. We spoke as Swain instructed us, and my faith, Lord King, but there were plenty to credit our story, and clap on to it that they did not wonder men of spirit— Well, I need not give particulars. You know well how that talk goes. It is enough to say that for one lenderman who rebuked us or held his tongue five acclaimed us for the right color of carls and offered to further us in any way, so it was not to King Ingi's advantage."

Swain smote his knotted fist upon the table-top.

"Said I not so, King?" he boomed. "The lendermen are all turned against us, that is, those who are not bound by ties of past service or kin or advantage."

The shadow settled again on the King's brow.

"You said it, and you were right, past doubt," he answered. "But I would I knew how it is that the whisper goes through Norway day by day that I am nidding and selfish, my chiefs overbearing, ill disposed to counsel——"

"The answer is Olvir Rosta," interrupted Oddi triumphantly.

Nobody spoke for a moment.



"So," said Swain slowly. "Olvir is with Eystein, eh?"

The scald nodded.

"It seems that after you struck him down last Winter and left him for dead, Swain, he journeyed to a certain monastery in Sweden, where the monks are noted for their bone-healing, and there he was cured of his broken arm."

Swain drilled Oddi with fierce blue eyes in whose depths burned a frosty fire.

"Cured?" he snapped.

"Yes, cured. I, myself, saw him when he was at the *skalli* of Philip Gyrd's son—he who was foster-brother to King Sigurd—and some of the folk asked him if he could strike as strong a stroke as he was used to. There was a block of wood in the yard, the trunk of a tree, which the thralls had used for a chopping block time out of mind. Olvir took up his ax, walked across the yard, heaved up the blade, and struck clean through the block at the one blow. Never saw I such a stroke!"

Swain grunted to himself. Gregorius exclaimed impatiently.

"But what has Olvir to do with our troubles?"

"Everything," replied Oddi. "It is he whose lips are set close by Eystein's ear as they once were by Sigurd's. It is he who suggests the stories that are put about. It is he who has sent messengers through the land, bidding the lendermen muster up their pride and refuse to be humiliated by you. It is he who has made a saying that Eystein's folk quote on every side: 'Shall Norway be ruled by a crippled King, milked like a cow for Gregorius, humbled to Swain and set apart for Erling to inherit?' It is he who is plotting secret blows this moment. It is he——"

Again, Swain's fist thundered on the table.

"By the Old Gods, I knew it! I felt his touch. But if I felt it I can frustrate what he attempts. He turned to Ingi. "It was to make certain of this, King, that I sent the scalds south—for I felt that there was a new power in Eystein's court. He is a vikingfarer, that King, a fair sword-and-shield warrior; but he was never a match for Sigurd when there was brain work to be done. And, moreover, he is too cautious. He requires such a fiend of evil as Olvir to think for him. Well, we shall have our work to do anew."

The King slumped down in his chair.

"The work is never finished," he muttered. "It was an endless task I set myself when I determined to be King in fact as well as name."

"Endless, indeed, it may be called," returned Swain. "Until death you may reckon upon it. But is that a reason to turn from it?"

The cold flame of his eyes burned upon Ingi's wan cheeks and lighted an answering glow. The King straightened his crooked back, plucked at the sword that lay across his lap.

"No, no, Swain," he cried. "I am tired. Without you—and Gregorius—and Erling—I— But it is better to work and labor for achievement than to suffer humiliation and disgrace. Better a thousand times! Better to die in the doing of it than to live."

And then the glow charred out of his face.

"But how?" he ended.

Swain ignored him, turning the icy blast of his glance upon Oddi.

"What you have said so far I suspected," said the Orkneyman. "But what have you learned that is definite? What does Olvir plan in secret?"

Oddi tossed up his hands.

"That is why Armod bided behind. We could learn no more at that time, yet we agreed that you should know at once of Olvir's return and the dissatisfaction we found so widespread. Also, you had bidden us meet you at Nidaros about this time. Therefore we decided that one of us must go, and next the question was which one and how should we manage it. It was not easy, for we must not leave the remaining one under suspicion. And the upshot of it was that we arranged to quarrel, and because I was the smallest that I should flee from Armod in wrath. Which I did, and made for Bergen, where I found the ship that fetched me hither."

"And Armod is safe?"

Oddi tore a mouthful of beef from a rib.

"As safe as may be. He will find a means to return as soon as he has news to tell."

"Will he come here?" struck in Gregorius.

"No, he is to go wherever he can serve the King's interests best, and that depends both upon what he learns and when."

Swain rose and stalked to a window looking out upon the town, standing there silent with his hands linked behind his back.

"And must we do nothing until then?"

exclaimed King Ingi nervously. "I do not like that. It is not honorable that one scald should do all the labor and assume all the risk."

"That is well said, Lord King," approved Gregorius. "It is my thought that I should fare southward and do what I may to make good the poison Olvir's talk has spread amongst those who should be friendly to us. You will be safe here, and Swain can see to it that——"

The Orkneyman swung around on his heel.

"Swain will go with you," said he gruffly. "You are correct in saying that the King will be safe here in the borg. My advice is that we leave with him the most of our followers, and take with us only such an escort as we require for protection on the road. Between us, Gregorius, I think we can impress a few loose-witted carls that Ingi is a better King than a bastard who lives on his longship."

"And a little gold might help matters," added Gregorius. "There are some men——"

"Such men will always sell out for more gold from the opposite camp," replied Swain. "It will serve our purpose better if the King empowers us to say that we are journeying to summon all the folk to a *Thing* which he will hold in the Spring as soon as the weather has opened up the country sufficiently."

"Yes, yes," assented Ingi eagerly. "Tell them that we shall hold such a *Thing*, and that it is my desire to deal fairly by all."

"We will not promise too much or appear to make concessions," said Swain grimly. "We will make it seem that we are giving what we please, for it always impresses men more when they believe that you do not have to be easy upon them. But be of good cheer, King. Thanks to Oddi and Armod, we have learned in time what to beware of, and he who is forewarned has no excuse in failing of victory. If it is in us to win we shall win."

"It would be easier, perhaps, if we collected men and made a swift onfall on Eystein before the snow flies," said Gregorius reflectively.

"He would hear of it, and prepare," replied Swain. "And then one of two things would happen. In the present state of the country, he might raise more men than we could and defeat us. Or if he could not he would take to his ships."

"In that case we should have the credit

of driving him forth of the country," put in the King.

"And what would that avail us?" growled Swain. "He would still be a live King, and a King is a danger so long as he lives. No, no, let us speak him fair, and not fight unless we must—and then only if we have every chance of taking him."

"It is not like you to suggest the avoiding of battle, Swain," objected Gregorius.

"Nor is it like me to agree to a battle which would no advance our fortunes," declared Swain. "I fight when it serves my purpose—not when it serves my enemy's."



IT WAS settled the next day that Swain and Gregorius should take with them on their journey a company of twenty men. They wished also to have Oddi accompany them, for the little scald was able to obtain the confidence of all manner of folk with his comic antics and odd quips and knowledge of lays and sagas and wise sayings; but King Ingi pleaded that he should not be left in Nidaros to seek entertainment from the sulky lendersmen of the Thronhjelm district, the merchantfolk and chance travelers.

"Here is winter upon us," he said, "and I shall be obliged to spend my days under cover. Moreover, I require one by me who can advise me sensibly at need, and who better should I find than Oddi—who, likewise, can keep watch for me over what goes on in the town?"

Oddi was loath to bide with the King when there was work afoot in the field, but Swain and Gregorius over-ruled him, for they admitted that Ingi was justified in his stand.

"Oddi shall stay with you," ruled Swain; "but if you will be guided by me, King, you will send him occasionally to visit the lendersmen and *boendr*\* roundabout that he may pick up such news as drifts over the countryside, and perhaps wheedle some of those who look askance at you to adopt a more friendly view."

"That will I," assented the King readily. "Indeed, it is not my intention to think only of myself when you two are scouring the land in my behalf, risking peril by road and sea and at the hands of outlaws and my enemies. If Oddi and I achieve nothing during your absence, it will not be for lack of effort."

Swain and Gregorius applauded this

\*Farmers.





King always rules with the most exacting sway?"

"Why, as to that we cannot say until——"

"Did you know that Ingi has sent out a general summons to a *Thing* to be held in the spring at which matters of revenue and all other questions of public interest are to be decided according to the people's wish?" interrupted Swain.

"No man has spoken to us of such a purpose."

"Nevertheless, it is so. Gregorius and I are empowered to invite you to attend it. It is not King Ingi's intent to rule so as to deserve the charge that he is unjust. Whatever he does, he does in the open."

"Also," said Gregorius, "it is not true that he has expended all his wealth in presents to myself, Swain and Erling. He has, to be sure, rewarded us generously, as becomes a chief who does not, like Eystein, keep his ship cabin floored with gold-chests; but he has ample means to reward similarly any other chiefs who are faithful to him in the difficult days which are sure to beset the land."

"And as for the extravagance of his court," put in Swain. "All men know me, and might estimate my opinion of a King who kept up a needless establishment. He keeps by him a sufficient number of housecarls and retainers to assure his security, and he pays them well and regularly—and what they eat and drink he purchases at fair prices from the townfolk and *boendr*, wherever he may happen to dwell, not seizing cattle and ale and bread as some Kings have done."

"It is true that Sigurd was wont so to do," admitted the lenderman. "But I have not heard that Eystein was bearing down with a heavy hand upon the Vikenfolk."

"Then he is not living up to his reputation as a viking-farer," rejoined Swain. "But rather endeavoring to placate the folk, so as to secure their support until he becomes too powerful to be concerned over their feelings."

"At the least," said the Sognman, casting about for a new criticism of King Ingi, "you will admit, both of you, Swain and Gregorius, that Eystein is a warrior and a fit ruler for the Norsefolk."

"I will admit that he is a sea-robber and a bastard," snapped Gregorius.

"Some men have called me a sea-robber," said Swain; "and I have no fault to pick

with Eystein because he leads his longships overseas. It would be better with Norway if more men practised their father's ways——"

"Well said, Swain," cried the lenderman, with his first show of cordiality.

"—and took from the Southland folk who have more goods than they deserve, seeing that no man should hold more than he can guard," resumed Swain. "Also, I will pass over the fact that Eystein is illegitimate. He is not the first King the land has owned whose mother had not troubled the priests. But I will support with my own sword the assertion that for all his twisted body Ingi is as brave and valiant a leader as Eystein, and he has proved it before now."

"Yet it was you who slew Sigurd for him, while he stood back behind the housecarls' shields!"

"Say, rather, the housecarls held him back," returned Swain. "We chiefs would not suffer him to risk his life when there was no need. But put him in a fight where there was need of his presence in the shield-wall, and you would find him foremost in the slaughter."

To this the lenderman had no answer to make, and when Gregorius would have carried on the argument Swain gave him a nudge in sign to be quiet. Afterward, in their sleeping chamber, Gregorius asked why he had broken off so, and Swain answered:

"It is not wise to give a man more to think upon than he can manage. This carl's wits have been set working by what we said. Let him turn it over during the night, and in the morning we will try him again."

But in the morning it was the lenderman, himself, who reopened the conversation.

"I have been thinking," he said, as Swain and Gregorius came to the high-table for the morning ale-draught. "You said many things last night which opened my eyes. When the stable varlets announced you, and said that you had twenty men to be bedded in the outhouses, I cursed you both and said to myself that Ingi had sent you to be a burden to me, or perhaps to do me a mischief; but I see now that I misjudged you, and, it may be, Ingi as well. Of Ingi I am not so sure, and I shall prefer to bide until the spring and see what is produced by the *Thing* of which you speak."

"Will you come to it?" asked Swain.

"That will I, with all my folk, for if there is a King in the land who will uphold the ancient customs and consult with the folk in open *Thing* I am for him, be he crippled or straight."

"Then are you for Ingil" cried Gregorius.

"That remains to be seen," replied the lenderman doggedly. "But I will agree with you to hold no intercourse with Eystein in the interval."

"More we would not ask," said Swain; "and as for the twenty men we quartered on you, have your steward estimate their cost and I will pay it to you, for King Ingil is not trying to put his men out at guest-quarters during the winter."

"No, no," exclaimed the lenderman hastily. "I am glad to have guests as famous as you and Gregorius, and I count it an honor that you have visited me. Stay with me, and I will prove it."

But Swain said that they might not stay, since they were journeying south, and planned to celebrate the Yule feast at the estate which Gregorius owned at Bratsborg in Hofund. And they said goodby, and continued on their way.

They made short stages, seeing that they had many folk to interview, and to all they advanced arguments similar to those they had employed with the man on the Sogn-side. Sometimes they were successful, and men spoke up heartily in favor of Ingil, and declared that they required no inducements to support him. Other men were lukewarm toward both Kings, and said it was a pity the land could not be governed by a *Thing* as Iceland was, and all Kings done away with, seeing that they were continually fighting amongst themselves or making war against other countries.

Again, King Ingil's envoys were entirely unsuccessful with certain men, who hated him, either for resentment of King Sigurd's death or for loyalty to King Eystein or for some personal reason. But by far the most of the men Swain and Gregorius visited accepted their arguments, and they had the satisfaction of believing that they had performed a worthwhile service.

No mischance delayed them, and they reached Gregorius's estate a considerable time in advance of Yule. Swain was disposed to continue his own journey and see what might be learned of Eystein's plans in the country south toward Viken; but Gregorius begged the Orkneyman to re-

main at Bratsborg, as he was compelled to arrange certain affairs that had been long unattended to by reason of his absence with King Ingil.

"Afterward," said Gregorius, "we will go to Erling's stead at Studla, and persuade him to accompany us in our further journeys. Very likely, by then, we shall have heard from Armod what Eystein and Olvir intend against us."

"That is reasonable," agreed Swain. "But let us wait no longer than is necessary."

As it chanced, they waited a shorter time even than Swain had desired.



THE third night of their stay at Bratsborg, Swain and Gregorius were awakened from their sleep by a thundering on the *skalli* door which brought every man in the building to his feet, fumbling for weapons and armor, and sent the women helter-skelter to the storerooms to find spare bows and arrows. But as the chiefs ran in their nightgear across the floor of the hall they heard, too, the murmur of voices without, and knew that those of their folk who slept in the outbuildings had been aroused, and that at the worst they need not fear an instant attack.

A thrall was unbarring the door when they reached it, and as the heavy timbers creaked aside, letting in the icy rigor of the north-wind to waft the arras on the walls and start the hearth-embers a-swirling, they glimpsed a single figure, panting on the hearthstone, and behind, in the dim darkness, a half-circle of housecarls and farm-servants, weapons in hand.

"So I find you here, Swain!" gasped the lone figure. "And Gregorius! Blessed Saints, but I am come in a good hour!"

"Armod!" exclaimed Swain.

And Gregorius, peering closer, cried out: "Are you hunted, scald? Who comes?"

"Eystein, no less," replied Armod, still fighting for his breath. "And he is not so far away. Take my advice, Gregorius, and rouse your folk and flee."

"He will destroy my property," protested Gregorius angrily. "Surely, I can hold him off until my friends——"

"How many men have you?" demanded the scald.

"Between us, Swain and I can count upon upward of two hundred—that is, with all the farmfolk."

"And Eystein has near a thousand! He would burn you within your own walls if you withstood him or harry you to death in the open. Best run for it, and carry with you every living soul."

Swain added gruff assent.

"He has the right of it, Gregorius," said the Orkneyman. "Let Eystein burn you out, if he will. You shall live to reap adequate reparation from him."

"God's curse!" swore Gregorius. "I never thought to put up with such humiliation. Yet what you both advise is the truth."

He raised his voice in a shout.

"Ho, Gregorius's folk, King Eystein assails us, and we must flee. Hasten! Let the housecarls stand watch— How come the enemy, Armod?"

"From Oslo. They drew their longships two miles over the ice."

"Then watch toward Oslo, carls," ordered Gregorius. "The farmfolk must gather such of the livestock as they can, and the household servants and the women shall collect the silver and whatever gear can be packed in bundles."

He turned to Armod.

"But you are weary and spent, scald. Come in, and while the folk strip the *skalli* you shall tell us what is toward."

"A cup of hot ale would go well tonight," answered Armod, "and food, if you have it, for I have run far and fast, seeing that I was able to evade Eystein's guards no longer ago than this afternoon, when they halted to rest, planning to make their onfall just before dawn in the morning."

"Dawn, eh?" growled Swain, casting a look at the stars that sparkled white in the sky's blue vault. "That is not far off. Well, to your tale, scald, to your tale! You have not been as nimble as Oddi in tricking our enemies."

"And with good reason," replied Armod. "As you seem to know, Oddi and I contrived his escape in a manner which left me free of reasonable suspicion; but Olvir was not disposed to trust me any farther than he must, and I believe that when he left——"

"Left? Where has he gone?"

"They attack in two places at once. While Eystein comes here to destroy Gregorius's property, Olvir leads a second force of longships by sea to Nidaros to wreak such damage upon King Ingi's property as he can, and, especially to

burn the shedded longships and the docks."

Swain snarled with rage. Gregorius went white with anxiety.

"But Ingi is there! In the borg! Who would have expected them to strike in the depth of winter?" said the tenderman. "And while we thought we had them securely watched?"

Armod flushed in the light of the torches which the serving folk had kindled to aid the hurried work of evacuation.

"In some sort, I am responsible that you had no longer notice," he acknowledged; "but as I said, Olvir suspected me, even though he might not prove aught against me, and he saw to it that I was closely watched, both while we dwelt in Viken by Eystein's fleet, and afterward when the expedition was set afoot. He asked to have me accompany his fleet, but Eystein refused, knowing well that Olvir hated me for my friendship with you, Swain, and would arrange to do away with me once he had me under his thumb."

"You are lucky to be alive," responded Swain grimly, "and I do not hold you responsible for the delay in reaching us. Oddi had the easier task of you two."

A queer grin of amusement split the Orkneyman's granite features.

"It is to be seen by anybody who knows you, Armod," he added, "that you have not dragged a slow foot."

Gregorius likewise forgot for the moment his anxiety and gave vent to an answering chuckle. This scald Armod was a very tall, lean man, and he was noted, not only for his scald craft, but for his personal vanity and the nicety of his apparel. He was accustomed to dressing in the best raiment his purse afforded. He also affected a drawling speech, and ordinarily was never known to move hastily. But he presented a very different figure from his wont, by the guttering torchlight. His clothes were rent and torn; his armor was stained and rusty; he had not yet recovered his breath, and his hair and beard were in such disarray as to make him look more like a pigtender than the gay scald whose appearance was familiar and sought after in every Northern court.

"Be that as it may," pursued Swain, "we have more to think of here than our own safety. Ingi will be safe enough in the borg, for we left him plenty of men. But we must strive to do what we may to thwart Olvir and punish him for the harm he will



do, in any case. It is like the Roysterer to deal an unexpected blow when his enemy is in winter quarters. I am glad it is Eystein and not he we flee from tonight."

They speeded up the folk who were rushing back and forth through the *skalli*, herded the women, children and servants into the yard, and then rounded up all the cattle that could be found in the darkness and confusion. And when this much had been accomplished Swain suggested that they should start the defenseless ones on the way, lingering in rear with every man who could use a weapon to make good the retreat.

So he and Gregorius, with Armod to assist them, besides a number of *boendr* who were tenants of Gregorius, mustered their men on a wooded slope above the *skalli*, and bided there until the dawn was at hand, and the first of Eystein's folk crept into the stead to spy out the situation. Most of these forelookers Swain slew, but several escaped the cordon that was cast around the stead and carried word to their King the trap was sprung. The result was to make Eystein all the more cautious—and he was always a cautious man in his undertakings, careful of his housecarls as he was careful of his wealth, for, he was accustomed to say, "a good warrior is worth a silver mark and better"—because the men Swain drove off were disposed to exaggerate the numbers of their opponents.

The King delayed his attack to await the stragglers of his column, and then continued to advance very deliberately, with bowmen pushed forward and ranging wide on his flanks. And in the meantime, Swain and Gregorius had gone off after the women and servants and cattle, leaving behind a small party of men on horseback to observe what Eystein did, and harrass him if he ventured beyond the outskirts of the Thelewood, into whose recesses the fugitives had fled.

But Eystein was no more inclined to plunge blindly into the forest than he had been to attack the stead without ascertaining first how numerous was the force opposed to him.

"It will be a crueller blow at Gregorius to burn his houses and slay his beasts," he said to the hotheads who were all for pursuit. "I would remind you, also, that he has many friends, and it will not be long before they come pricking to assist

him. If we tarried here, it might fare hard with us. The wise man takes a little profit."

There was much discontent amongst King Eystein's folk notwithstanding, and some grumbled openly.

"This it is to serve a King who reckons war in terms of saving," said these men. "We are not like to profit much by him."

And indeed, it was generally reckoned that Eystein gained small honor by this expedition.

"His blades dripped the blood of kine and swine," folk jeered.

But it is true that he had the satisfaction of inflicting heavy loss upon Gregorius. Bratsborg steading was one of the richest and fairest in Norway, yet when Eystein had finished with it there was naught but ashes and dead beasts, and the land ached from the tempest of fire and blood that had racked it. There was not so much as a grain of wheat or a spear of hay to be had in the clearing.

"We had given Gregorius viking law," was the way Eystein put it.

Of this destruction, however, Gregorius knew no more than what was told to him and Swain by the party of men they had stationed to safeguard their retreat. These carls had left the stead while the looting was in progress, being assured that they could serve no purpose by remaining, as it was evident that the raiders did not intend to penetrate the country farther, and caught up with the main body early in the afternoon.

"So far, so good," commented Swain when he had heard the report. "We are safe. What shall we do next? Take all these folk to another of your properties?"

Gregorius considered for a while, but in the end he shook his head.

"No," he said. "It will be necessary for me to make good whatever damage Eystein has wrought at Bratsborg. Therefore it is better that the Bratsborg folk should bide here in the forest, until it shall be certain that they can return to the stead and start the work of rebuilding. They can make shift to erect huts, and we will send to our friends for aid, and in one way or another they will get along."

"That is a wise decision," approved Swain. "But what of yourself? Will you remain with them?"

"No, they do not need me. The steward

can direct the work which has to be done. I will go with you to—to——"

He hesitated.

"Exactly," said Swain in his harsh, curt way. "To do—what?"

"Why, it was you who said we should do what we could to drive Olvir from the northern lands! And we cannot leave Ingi shut up in——"

Swain nodded.

"Yes, but we shall require more of a company than we can fetch from this place. It is to be remembered, too, that the roads will be snowy and travel delayed. We should have a longship; the sea is still unfrozen."

"True," admitted Gregorius. "But whither— Ha, let us seek out Erling! Studla is in Etne, and that is not a difficult journey from the Thelewood over the mountains. Erling will give us what we need, and I doubt not come with us."

"That is a good plan," agreed Swain. "How many men shall we take?"

Gregorius cast about him, and having examined with his steward the tasks which would likely fall to the lot of his farm folk—and it is to be said that the tasks turned out to be heavier than they had reckoned upon, albeit everything was completed and the stead rebuilt by spring—he suggested that they be content with ninety of the sturdiest housecarls, not including the ten men of Swain's own company of Orkneyfolk who had attended them on the road from Throndhjem.

Swain signified his assent, and they took from the fugitive horses for the chief men pack-beasts for provisions, with sufficient store of covers and set forth upon the march through the forest. When they had climbed higher in the mountains and made their camp for the night, they could see away off in the southwest a leaping crimson glow that formed a curtain across the evening sky, and close by them there was a mighty howling of wolves, while in the north the *Jotuns'* (Giants') Lights pranced crazily.

"There are torches lighted for us in some chief's banquet hall," said Armod, pointing to the illumination in the north. "Perhaps Valhalla!"

"And behind us burns a fire Eystein kindled to scorch our heels," added Gregorius sourly.

"And Fenris' brood give tongue in the forest yonder," jeered Swain. "Why? Do

they smell blood on the wind? It may be, for I think this will be a winter of slayings in Norway—from which warriors will win little honor."



SWAIN and Gregorius came down from the mountains on the head of Hardanger Fjord, and so reached Erling's steading at Studla in Etne; but the farmfolk who greeted them as they rode from the forest into the cleared land answered their first question as to Erling by telling how he had gone two days previously to Bergen in consequence of rumors from the seaside that there were raiding longships off the coast.

"It is plainly to be seen that Olvir will not succeed in setting the whole land by the ears," said Swain. "Did Erling have good strength of men with him, carls?"

Erling's steward came up as Swain asked this question; he was a man named Poppo Ottar's son, a very honest fellow.

"Our lord had perhaps as many folk as you and Gregorius, Swain," he answered now. "But the *boendr* up and down the fjord were aroused by the same tidings that reached him, and it is likely he will come to Bergen with the right side of a thousand warriors to his back."

"That is excellent," exclaimed Swain, "and if we can obtain means to follow him he will be so much the stronger."

"Have you had news from Nidaros?" asked Gregorius, with anxiety.

"Not since the snow covered the roads, lord," replied the steward.

"It is thither we must fare, Swain," urged Gregorius.

"I think you are right," answered Swain. "But we must hit upon some means of voyaging by sea."

"I do not believe there will be any difficulty about that, lords," volunteered Poppo the steward. "Erling has two longships here under sheds, and the Princess Kristin is in the *skalli*. I suggest that you ask her to assist you on your journey. Right sure am I she will do anything to aid two such famous lords, who are likewise her husband's closest friends."

Swain and Erling agreed to this, and leaving their men to be entertained by Erling's farmfolk they went with Poppo to the *skalli* on a hillside above the fjord. Here Poppo summoned one of Kristin's bowermaids, and bade the lass go to her

mistress with word of the guests who waited without, and it was no longer time than was required for the wench to traverse the *skalli* to the bower behind the dais and return before she was back at the door and inviting them to enter.

They found Kristin sitting in a chair covered with a bearskin, suckling the infant Magnus she had recently born to Erling. She was a finely-proportioned woman, ruddy of complexion, with a great mass of silken yellow hair and a pleasant face. She had also a very strong character and a will to obtain what she desired, which was not surprizing, considering the stock of which she came.

Gregorius knew her of old, and he spoke her kindly, pointing his finger at the babe that pulled at the breast, regardless of the tall men in armor who stood in the bower-door.

"I see that you have a son who is in all ways what a sucking King should be," he said, jesting on the ambition which all men knew Erling to entertain in his son's behalf.

And it is the truth that the babe was a handsome babe, sturdy, long-limbed, with unwinking blue eyes such as had characterized his grandfather, King Sigurd the Jorsalafarer, who was as knightly a monarch as ever sat on the Norse throne.

"Whether he will be King or not, I think, must depend largely upon what others do for him in his youth," answered Kristin.

"That is not to be denied," assented Gregorius. "And when the time comes I will do——"

"It is in my mind that you shall aid him little, Gregorius," interrupted Kristin; "but I believe that no man will do more for him than Swain there."

Swain grunted in his beard.

"So you know me?" he growled.

"I should know you anywhere by the descriptions I have heard of you," she replied.

But Gregorius was not content with the answer she made to him.

"Indeed, you wrong me, Kristin," he persisted, "Erling is my friend, and I would do aught to help him or his son or you."

"That I do not question," said Kristin; "but it may be you will not be present in the land when my son grows toward manhood."

And this remark is worthy of noting by reason of the fact that matters afterward fell out as Kristin had predicted. Gregorius

died years before Magnus Erling's son made his bid for the crown, and in Magnus's fight for that crown no man aided him more than Swain, not even his own father, Erling.

Now, Kristin turned to Swain again.

"I have heard that you do not regard women highly," she said.

"I do not," said Swain.

"Perhaps, then, I am foolish to ask a favor of you," she said.

"It will depend upon the favor," returned Swain.

And Gregorius, fearing lest Swain in his bluntness should offend her so that she would refuse the request they had to proffer to her, interposed—

"It is strange that you ask a favor of Swain, seeing that we are come to crave help from you."

"There is this to be said of the favor I ask Swain," she replied; "it is not in my own behalf."

"Whose, then?" demanded Swain.

She indicated the babe.

"I will have you foster him when he reaches the age to be taken from women's hands and must be bred to weapon use and statecraft," she said—not pleadingly, but as one asks with right, almost as if she was conferring an honor.

"I have sons of my own to educate," answered Swain.

"You are all the more fit to educate mine."

"And I do not maintain any estate in Norway," he went on gruffly. "My own home is in the Orkneys, across hundreds of miles of stormy sea. How can I undertake to bring up a youth when I have no means to surround him with the estate and comforts befitting his birth?"

"I am not concerned for that," she declared. "I would rather my son was fostered by you in a longship than by King Ingi in a royal borg."

"Humph," grunted Swain. "I will talk with Erling concerning this at some future date. As to aiding the boy, I will do whatever I can—because he is Erling's son. But—" and he grinned slowly, as he rarely did—"I hope that he will not be so cautious as his father, who, since he wed a princess, has weighed every step he took, lest it should hamper what his son must undertake a score of years afterward."

"Is this a promise that you have made?" asked Kristin.



"When I say a thing, I do a thing," barked Swain.

An expression of relief crossed her face.

"That is your reputation," she acknowledged. "Well, I am content. If the boy has you to advise him in after-years he will not go far astray. I am aware of Erling's hesitancy of late that you speak of, and you may be sure it comes from no counsel of mine."

"If a woman undertook to advise me I would cut her throat," rasped Swain. "Now, do you aid us—and I will say, as you said, that the favor we ask of you is not in our own behalf. Eystein has raided Gregorius's stead, and burned it out. Olvir Rosta is afloat with Eystein's fleet, and heads for Nidaros—not Bergen, as Erling seems to have thought in starting hence. Give us one of his longships, and we will make shift to reach Nidaros in time to rescue King Ingi, who bides there with only Oddi the little to counsel him."

Kristin rose while he was still speaking, and summoned a bowermaid by a snap of her fingers. To the woman she handed the babe, who shrieked with anger at his interrupted meal; but regardless of this, she did up her gown, and led the way from the room.

"We will have Poppo set the men to launch *Dragonfly*," she said over her shoulder. "That is the swifter of the two. Will you not have the other?"

Swain looked to Gregorius, and the lenderman shook his head.

"It is not well to denude your stead of men at this time, Kristin," he said. "Erling has already fetched away as many as he thought it safe to take. But if you will, dispatch riders along both banks of the fjord to advise those lendermen who have ships fit to take the water to launch out and follow us. It is late for cruising, but if Eystein's folk can crawl the sea tracks, we should be niddering not to follow."

"It shall be done," she promised. "Now, come with me, and we will start the shipwrights to work, and set about the provision of stores. I would not have any friends of Erling's embarrassed for means to fight our foes in a time like this."

As she passed ahead of them into the hall, Gregorius dropped back and put his mouth to Swain's ear.

"Ho, she is no time-waster, this one! She decides like a warrior."

"I would not give her room on my cross-bench," snarled Swain. "What! A woman who would be thrusting her thoughts into men's doings? Never! Erling is welcome to her."

But as her voice rose in a rapid series of orders to Poppo and other servants, he added reluctantly:

"Yet it is not to be denied that she has aided us as much as Erling could have done. And the babe is a lusty atom. He should be a brave fighter in another fifteen winters."

Swain did not know it, but this chance meeting with Kristin and her son was to have an important influence upon the whole future trend of his life. It was the first time he saw Magnus Erling's son, and as has been said, to Swain more than any other, Magnus owed the rank he won in early manhood. And his judgment of Kristin was later to be confirmed, and to have further effects which nobody could estimate. But all this is another story and has nothing to do with the matter of Swain's outlawing with which we deal here.

Kristin speeded their business so thoroughly that within a day they had *Dragonfly* launched and loaded with sufficient stores, and they lost no time thereafter in pushing down the fjord, for their greatest fear was that the ice would seal them in before they could reach the sea. But their luck aided them to this extent. They got to Bergen, and there they found Erling, who, as they had reckoned, was at a loss what to do next, for the folk on the seaside sent in all kinds of rumors of strange longships, and there was talk of forays here and onfalls there, of fishing-boats seized and coasters sunk. And although much blood had been shed, and several villages and many ships destroyed or taken, no man could say whence the blow came or what should happen next.

But so soon as Swain and Gregorius had told their tale all was plain to Erling, and as always in a moment of real emergency he forgot his disposition to dally and delay and gathered every man and ship he could on Bergen strand. It was a scratch fleet, at best, but they could count upon their crews to fight, and the most encouraging sign of all was that the merchant folk of Bergen labored like housecarls to assist them.

"Every setback has its advantage," commented Swain as they set sail. "If

Eystein and Olvir burn and destroy enough property, without any great loss of life to our folk, they will win us so many friends that we can laugh their efforts to scorn."

Erling's ugly face lighted with satisfaction—he was one of the ugliest, as he was one of the wealthiest and wildest, men in the land.

"Ha, you have the arrow by the nock, Swain!" he cried. "I tarried a day or two in Bergen on my way to Studla from Thronthjem, and all I got was sullen looks and gloomy words, 'Why had King Ingi forsaken the town for Nidaros?' 'What was this talk of higher taxes?' 'Why would the king have no counsel, except—' Ah, but you know how it went!

"But there was a mighty change when I returned hither after the first rumors that raiders were afloat. Every merchant in the town, every lenderman and *boendr* in the district, was eager to proclaim his loyalty. The fools! I asked them if it had never occurred to them that a viking king like Eystein must wage viking war, and they shuffled their feet and said that they had been told such-and-such, and——"

"Yes, that was Olvir's roguery," said Swain. "He filled the land with vague whispers and threats and tales of Ingi's intentions. If he had been content to abide by that, and let his poison trickle over the countryside, during the long months men have naught to do save sit by the *skalli* hearths and talk, he would have accomplished more than he is like to do now. But few men can wait and watch. It requires more wit than Olvir has—for which the Gods be praised!"

Gregorius crossed himself.

"It is not wise to call upon the Old Gods, Swain," he admonished.

Swain shrugged his shoulders.

"I find that no Gods help me unless I help myself," he said. "And I have always maintained that the Old Gods are more partial to fighting and bloodshed than this God the priests tell us about."



FROM every vik and river-mouth boatloads of angry men put out to join Swain's ships, and when they entered the tortuous waters of Thronthjem Fjord he had twenty-five vessels under his command, although none of his longships pulled more than twenty oars and the majority were *snekkes* (cutters) and large

barges and fishing-craft. And all the shore-folk told the same tale: Olvir Rosta, with eighteen dragons and longships, had rowed up the fjord, burning and ravaging on his path, with the proud boast that when he had finished at Nidaros "Ingi would not be so wealthy a King as he had been."

"This is excellent luck," quoth Swain, after they had made sure their foe was in front of them. "We have Olvir in the situation he likes least of any. He must fight to be free."

"It is only to be hoped that he has not done King Ingi any harm," said Erling nervously. "If he took the King——"

"He could never take the King!" derided Gregorius. "Why, Ingi will have nigh as many men in the borg, what with the merchantfolk and the countryside fugitives, as Olvir could bring against him."

"Yes," agreed Swain. "Olvir can burn the town, and much good may it do him! But we took thought to the King's safety before we went south, Erling."

"Nevertheless," objected Erling stubbornly, "I believe that we take an unnecessary risk if we fling ourselves blindly at Olvir, seeing that all the information we have shows that he possesses eighteen dragons and longships of size, whereas we——"

"Bah!" snorted Swain. "We have more ships, and what is most important, we have more men."

"He will row down our small craft," protested Erling.

"Not often," cried Gregorius. "And if he does, the carls in the water can cling to his oars!"

"That is the talk!" approved Swain. "Come, Erling, you did not profess such doubts when you and I, with only six ships, took the great Saracen dromond in the Inner Sea.\* Heart up, lad! Remember, every blow we strike for Ingi today may help that youngling of yours when he comes to the improving of his estate."

Erling smiled unwillingly.

"It is not to be denied that you have the secret of success, Swain," he admitted. "But you are disposed to over-strain your luck. However, since I am in the minority I will accept your judgment."

Swain dealt him a staggering clap on the shoulder.

"Well said!" pronounced the Orkneyman.

\*Mediterranean.

"Now, hark to my plan. When Olvir sees us he will close—for two reasons: First, because he will think himself superior to us, and second, because through us lies the way to the sea. And we will not lie to for him, but row ahead as fast as may be, and meet him. Gregorius and I will make for Olvir's dragon."

"You will be over-matched," exclaimed Erling.

"Not with me aboard," grinned Swain. "Olvir dreads me, albeit he does not fear me, for he knows I shall some day be his bane. Let me get my grapplings over his rail, and that will be his end—unless he can swim ashore and win through the country southwards. But the rest of you may forget Olvir; he is for Gregorius and me to trip. I would have you other carls divide by threes, as near as possible, a longship, a *snekke* and one smaller boat together. Never mind the others of Olvir's fleet. Let them attack you or flee, as they please. But do you in your eight groups of three each pick out one dragon or longship and fall upon it, larboard, starboard and astern. That way we will break him quickest, for three of your craft can over-match any dragon, and although others of his ships come up and take yours while you are in the act of boarding, still, you should be able to hold your own, for once you have cleared Olvir's ship you can lay it by the board with another of his or row after and retake any of yours he would tow off."

Gregorius and Erling both approved this plan, and the other chiefs in the fleet were ready to accept whatever the three leaders put forward. The one thought of all was to take vengeance for the ravages Olvir had made alongshore. And they sailed up Thronthjem Fjord with stout hearts and weapons ready, keeping a keen lookout for signs of the enemy. But indeed, they had warning of Olvir's presence long before they sighted his masts. For over Nidaros was spread a mighty pall of smoke that was visible far across cliff and scaur, cape and headland. Away down the fjord they could smell the cinders in the air, and the smoke was like a storm cloud in summer.

"May the foul fiend rip his vitals!" cursed Gregorius hotly. "He has burned the shipyards and docks, yes, and the spare ship timber. My oath on it! This is the best burning Norway has seen in many a day. The town would be enough, but we

shall be short of longships in the spring."

"Perhaps, and perhaps not," answered Swain grimly. "There are always longships to be had for the taking, my friend."

"We have every reason to endeavor to take a few today," assented Gregorius.

Olvir's folk sighted Swain's fleet from the shore, where they were loosing arrows into King Ingi's borg and clearing out those houses in the town which they had not yet given to the torch, and from *Dragonfly's* poop could be heard faintly the grumbling blasts of the ludr-horns calling the raiders back to their ships. Olvir was able to push off from the strand in good shape, with ample time to arrange the order of his vessels and lay his own plans, and it was apparent that he did not intend to waste a moment in getting to close quarters.

His big ships drew up in two lines across the fjord, the ships of the second line spaced in intervals of the first line, so that if for any reason a first-line ship was held up it should not block a following second-line ship. The ludr-horns growled again, and the eighteen big longships and dragons foamed down upon Swain's fleet, which was grouped in threes, with room between each group for shifting and turning at need.

Olvir's ships were packed with men. There were archers thick on poop and fore-castle, and spearmen strung along the gang-way between the rowing-benches, and by each oarsman crouched a shield bearer to protect him from the hostile shafts. But if Swain's ships did not make such an imposing appearance they were even more heavily manned. In fact, upon his smaller craft the pressure was so great as to interfere with the working of the oars, and dozens of men were bidden to lie on the ballast or huddle under the rowing-benches, with the result that occasionally half a crew were hidden.

From Olvir's ships, too, came yells and threats and derisive jests. Swain's men were as silent as their leader. Olvir's bowmen loosed their fanging-shots before Swain's folk had even bent their bows. And Olvir's forecastlemen and ship captains, too, read in the odd bunching of their enemy's craft an indication of unsteadiness, if not of panic.

"Run them down!"

The cry echoed from longship to dragon in Olvir's array.

"Over the gunwales, carls!" came the



answering shout. "Heu! Swing oars for the Thronthjem folk!"

Now, the arrow hail swept Swain's craft, and men crumpled on the rowing-benches or pitched into the water. Swain's bowmen answered, and gaps opened in the serried ranks on poop and forecastle of Olvir's ships. Spears began to *whish* through the air, and one cast by Erling wrought the first real harm to Olvir's side. It smote down the steersman of one of the viking dragons, and as the big vessel swung over and lost headway Erling's group surrounded it, boarded in a trice and tossed three yelling waves of men across its decks.

But success was impartial. Olvir, himself, rammed a *snekke* and drove it under in a welter of shattered timbers, oars and bobbing heads. Some of its crew swam to safety, others grasped at Olvir's oars or tried to clamber the steep hull of his dragon; but the most of them, burdened with weapons and armor or stunned by the shock, were drowned.

A fishing-boat, a bluff-bowed, unwieldy, little craft, was likewise sunk in trying to round the bows of a longship which its two mates were coming up to board. All across the fjord Swain's vessels were ranging up to Olvir's bigger ships, and fighting to come to hand-grips. Sometimes they failed. Of Olvir's first line six broke through, including Olvir's dragon, which Swain promptly rowed against in his longship and barely missed, shooting beneath the curling, green tail in the very wash of the sixty churning oars.

Swain, spear in hand, had a fleeting glimpse of Olvir's black bush of beard and leering, evil eyes and swart face beyond the narrow gap. He flung the spear with hasty aim, and as Olvir heaved up his shield to catch it cried—

"Ho, archers! A golden arm-ring to the man who brings Olvir down!"

But Olvir dropped to avoid the shafts, and his mocking laughter drifted over the water as *Dragonfly* was backed and swung around to try to overhaul the dragon again.

The fight was become a rough-and-tumble ring battle, as if two armies were pent up inside a shield wall to finish each other. Swain's folk had cleared and taken three of Olvir's first-line ships, and were now working their prizes downstream to assist the remainder of his fleet, which were

bunched around five longships of Olvir's second-line, which, in turn, were being assisted by the other four ships of this line. Five of the first line had got clear and were well away down the fjord. Midway between these and their unfortunate brethren, who were milling about under pressure of Swain's folk, was Olvir, obviously uncertain what he had best do.

He made up his mind as Swain came at him the second time. The harsh, bubbling grunt of his horn sounded urgently, once, twice and thrice. The ships of his first line heard the summons, turned reluctantly and rowed back toward the fighting. Swain, by the helmsman of *Dragonfly*, determined to make one more effort to board his enemy before the vanguard returned, and he charged down upon Olvir at a speed which drew sobs from his straining oarsmen.

Desperately, Olvir turned to larboard to avoid *Dragonfly's* helm. Swain perceived the hostile dragon's prow commence to lurch away, and he bade his steersman turn as well. But instead of smashing bow-on into Olvir, his prow slid along the length of the dragon's hull, splintering to pieces those oars which were not withdrawn or allowed to trail inboard to miss his shearing beak.

And a second time he passed Olvir so close that he could see the hairs bristling on his enemy's throat.

"Stand until I board you!" he shouted.

"I have other duties to do, Swain," answered Olvir, grinning.

Swain leaped to his gunwale, sword in hand.

"Overboard with you, Olvir, and I will meet you in the water," he offered. "One of us must drown."

But Olvir shook his head, still grinning.

"That is not the way I intend to slay you. Here, though, is something of yours."

And he stooped and snatched up the spear Swain had cast at him, and sent it back so straight and hard that if Swain had not thrown himself to the deck he must have been smitten through mail and bone.

"Ha," laughed Olvir. "I thought you said to stand!"

Swain regained his feet, and lifted a clinched fist.

"I said stand," he shouted hoarsely. "And stand I meant. Stand—anywhere! On sea or on land, only so that it be where you can not dodge or trick your way out."

But Olvir waved a mocking hand in parting, and Gregorius, at Swain's elbow, exclaimed—

"I am not one to draw back, Swain, but if we bide where we are Olvir will have seven ships around us in a dozen more strokes."

Swain cast his eye over the gunwale, and saw that it was so.

"Wear around, steersman," he called. "Back to our friends. We must all hang together, for the wolf pack are not yet broken."

This second phase of the fight was sharp and brief. Up the fjord Swain's ships that still floated, with the three of Olvir's that were taken in the first clash, were struggling with the nine ships of Olvir's that had been unable to break free, but had kept their gunwales clear, albeit precariously and with intermitent success. Olvir, leading the six ships of his first line that had broken free in that first rush, stormed back to the relief of his battered crews; and Swain, hugging the farther shore to escape encirclement by the succoring ships, pulled into the turmoil separately and on his own account to lend what aid he could.

If Olvir had been willing to stay and fight it out to a finish the end might have gone either way, but all men said afterward—and so the scalds sung of it—that there would have been few victors afoot to celebrate the triumph. But Olvir was not willing to prolong the struggle, nor was he in any way craven or cowardly in so doing, as even Swain admitted, for he was in a hostile country, a long row up the fjord, and for all he knew there might be reinforcements for Swain within reach. Therefore he acted as became a wise leader. He tore into the huddle of shipping, where Swain's folk lay in one ring, as it were, around certain of Olvir's and more of Olvir's formed a second ring around these, and his prows split the confusion asunder.

Ships flew this way and that way. Two more of Swain's were sunk, with scant loss of life because their crews escaped to friendly decks. And despite Swain's most determined efforts, Olvir succeeded in working loose the five of his ships in the inner ring, flung aboard them some fresh hands from the craft of his vanguard that had suffered least, took advantage of a sudden favoring puff of wind to raise his sails and had disentangled himself almost

before Swain understood what was happening.

Swain pelted after him with his heavier craft and the three longships that had been carried, but by hook or crook, by smart sailing and clever handling and working his folk remorselessly at the oars, Olvir was able to keep his lead until they gained the open sea. There the first heavy snow-storm of the winter enveloped them, and Olvir made good his escape by pulling out in the teeth of it, and loath though he was to give over the pursuit Swain yielded to the advice of Gregorius and Erling and bade his ship-captains run for shelter.

"If any one but Olvir sailed west tonight I would expect the sea to take vengeance for us," he said. "But well I know he will survive storm and tempest no less than my wrath."

And so it was, and Olvir rode out the storm and returned to Viken after losing but one more ship of his fleet, which was accounted good seamanship by all men. But at the same time it was frequently said in Norway that winter, by Eystein's folk as well as by Ingi's, that Olvir won no honor in his encounter with Swain, for if he sunk four of Swain's smaller vessels, Swain captured three of his, which were all larger than the largest ship in Swain's fleet. The man-scathe, also, was heavier against Olvir. But it was counted equally true that Olvir deserved commendation for his daring in destroying Nidaros—yet it was a blow which helped rather than hindered the folk it was aimed at.

 SWAIN, with Gregorius and Erling and their several companies, returned to Nidaros the day before Yule, and King Ingi welcomed them at the strand and bade them celebrate the Yule feast with him.

"For it is plainly to be seen that God has willed you to do so," he said, "seeing that where it was your original purpose to pass the season at Gregorius's farm you are come hither again by no wish of your own. Therefore help me to be merry a while before we must set our wits once more to the plotting and scheming."

The three comrades were not slow to accept the King's invitation, as they and their folk were all ship-weary, and they were not the less ready to do so because of the marked change in Ingi's condition since their

departure a few weeks past. Olvir's raid had aroused all the lendermen and *boendr* of the Thronhjerm district, and here, as roundabout Bergen in the south, the people who had been lukewarm toward the crippled King were now eager to plight their allegiance and claim his protection, while the merchant folk, after the sorry loss Olvir's vikings had occasioned them, had no use for King Eystein and proffered Ingi all the aid they could give him.

The change in the attitude of the Thronhjermfolk toward the King was strikingly apparent when Swain led his warriors into the hall of the royal borg. The high table, where only Oddi had sat with the King the day they parted with him, was thronged, and at a second table immediately under it were a score more younger sons and less distinguished of the *boendr*, who were only slightly inferior in degree to the barons who sat to right and left of Ingi's chair.

"Ho," growled Swain. "Matters run contrariwise, it seems. The last time I visited you, King, there was room for me beside you."

Gregorius echoed Swain.

"It has ever been said that the home-stayers freeze out the warriors at most courts," he said.

But Erling, as usual, was inclined to diplomacy.

"Instead of being indignant to find the King so popular," he exclaimed "we ought to give thanks to the blessed Saints who have moved men's hearts to turn to the rightful King."

"Bah," said Swain so loudly that all in the hall could hear him, "it was not the Saints who turned their hearts, but Olvir."

Several lendermen started to their feet at this, with hands on their swords, and King Ingi interposed hastily.

"If my tables are crowded for this Yule feast," he declared as loudly as Swain had spoken, "it is undoubtedly because of what my most faithful friends here have accomplished for me. Never King had stouter or more loyal servants than Swain, Gregorius and Erling. If the high table is filled, then I will sit elsewhere, and that place shall be considered the high table."

And he called to his chamberlains and had them arrange a second table at the end of the hall by the women's door, and here he sat with the three chiefs who had worsted

Olvir, and all during the feast the King's chair at the high table was vacant.

There was much feeling over this incident, both in Nidaros borg during the feast, and throughout the land afterward, for, as always happens in these matters, numerous men were prone to jealousy of Swain and his friends and the influence they were charged to possess over the King. But the King and Erling took steps to conciliate those who were offended by what Swain and Gregorius had said, and no harm came of it so far as the King was concerned. The harm it later contributed to Swain's interest will be set down in its proper place.

One reason why a fray was averted in the hall was that Armod entered immediately after Swain and his friends, and Oddi the Little jumped up to welcome his brother scald, and as they were both very popular the chiefs of all factions became interested in the quarrel they began.

"So that long neck of yours escaped Olvir's ax!" exclaimed Oddi.

"It has escaped many perils the while you were here behind the palisades of the borg," rejoined Armod.

Oddi quirked up his face to make men laugh, and retorted—

"Nevertheless, the old saw says well:

*"Lean shanks and long neck  
Seldom bide the battle's wreck."*

All the folk laughed at this, and Armod flushed angrily.

"Little scald, little scald," he cried, "it requires that I read you a lesson. Small warriors like you should not besmirch a brave man's courage."

Oddi knew contrition now, for he was as full aware as any man in the hall that Armod was as brave a warrior as lived in the north—and he, himself, would have shed blood to support the contention.

"No, no, Armod," he answered. "I spoke only in jest. It was you performed the most valorous feats in remaining with Eystein under Olvir's nose, when the Roysterer was picking his wits for an excuse to slay you. What I did was only to prove that a small man can run as fast as a big one."

Saying which, he struck a vainglorious attitude, and the hall rocked to the laughter of his hearers. But Armod would not be mollified.



"That you meant no harm I will believe," he said gravely, "seeing that your understanding is hindered by the narrowness of your mind, and touching that——"

"What?" objected Oddi hotly. "Narrowness of mind! Phaugh, scald, know that if my body is wizened my head is large, and there is that in it can outwit you or——"

"Peace, peace!" urged Armod, tranquil at last, having pricked the other's vanity. "Of the bigness of your head there is no question. God wot, it would serve a man thrice your bulk! But as to what is in it, why, unless we open it up to make certain, there is no reason for supposing it contains aught more than a sheep's head—which has the merit of tasting sweet, when sufficiently boiled with the proper herbs!"

The laugh turned upon Oddi, and he clutched his sword in a rage.

"In your teeth!" he howled. "Any man may open up my head who can do so—and that is what you are not capable of."

"But seriously, Oddi," continued Armod, ignoring the challenge, "I am of a mind to read you here a proper reproof for the most traitorous falsehood of which you were guilty to your scald craft. It is unthinkable that a man of your repute should be permitted to——"

Oddi turned defiantly to the hall.

"Bah! He prates of the quarrel we set up as excuse for me to make pretense of fleeing him. Pretense of fleeing him! Would you believe it, Lord King," he appealed to Ingi, "the great fool has come to believe that I fled him in sore earnest and owned respect for his insane versifications."

"Your fears we may discuss anon, Oddi," declared Armod; "but indeed, you speak too lightly of the rules of our craft. Your scorn of neatly-rounded lines and thought-provoking lays is too well known to——"

"I am no friend to your absurd, prankish rhyming verse," snapped Oddi. "No, no, the old measured line of our fathers that was meant to be sung to the rattle of sword on shield, that is good enough for me."

"Yet you essay the rhymed line," protested Armod, "and in so doing must lay yourself open to judgment on——"

"By the Hammer!" swore Oddi. "All this over a matter of words and a rhyme! You must know——" he pursued, addressing the King and the folk in the hall generally—

"that to delude Eystein I composed a lay in the manner of Eyvind Scaldaspillar's 'Hakonarmal' to celebrate King Sigurd, whom Swain slew in the gateway of Sigrid Seata's house in Bergen that day we——"

Armod plucked the words from his mouth.

"And in his last verse he had two false rhymes, no less! Listen, Lord King, and every other man who prides himself on owning any scald craft. What think you of this—which is typical of all that went before?"

Sooner shall Fenriswolf devour  
The race of man from shore to shore,  
Than such a grace to kingly crown  
As gallant Sigurd want renown.  
Life, land, friends, riches, all will fly,  
And we in slavery shall sigh.  
But Hakon in the blessed abodes  
Forever lives with the bright gods.

He paused expectantly and looked over the faces of the King and chiefs.

"You see?" he demanded. "The first and second lines are bad enough, but——"

"And if 'devour' and 'shore' do not make sufficient chime," roared Oddi, "I will eat sword-steel. And for the——"

"'Abodes' and 'gods,'" drawled Armod. The tall scald shuddered.

"Really, Oddi, you do well enough when you stick to rough sword-lays and jingles, but——"

"If you do not like my verse, try my sword," shouted Oddi.

*Swish* went his blade, and he leaped the gap between himself and Armod, but Swain was quicker. The Orkneyman stepped in front of the fiery little scald, regardless of his swinging sword, and pushed him back.

"What?" rumbled Swain's deep voice. "You draw sword in the King's face? Men have had their right hands struck off for less."

"Try it," retorted Oddi sturdily. "I am a free man, and there is no law which denies a free man the right to defend his honor—in the King's face or out of the King's face. And if——"

Swain clapped his hands to his ears.

"Mercy!" he pleaded. "You can out-talk me, scald. I admit it. But let me advise you and Armod to restrict your quarrels to the arguments in which you excel. We can not spare either of you to slay the other, and whether you are right or Armod, we love you both, and the keenness

of your wit and the sweetness of Armod's singing are two things that even a rude warrior like myself can undertake to enjoy."

"I have no desire to fight with Oddi," said Armod in his deliberate fashion. "But I will maintain that if he will ape my verse forms, he——"

"In your teeth!" foamed Oddi, dancing with rage.

And the King took a hand to placate the pair, as the chiefs at the high table who had been ready a few moments ago to cross blades with Swain on the floor rushes tottered in their seats from excess of mirth.

"Perhaps none of us here is fitted to judge between two scalds as expert as Armod and Oddi," quoth Ingi merrily; "but it is in the power of both of them to lighten the hours of our feast, and I suggest that the surest way for Oddi to reveal his featness with words is for him to sing us his new lay of 'Nidaros Burning.' Afterward Armod can chant his recollections of Swain's fight in the fjord and the flight of Olvir in the storm."

"Let the scalds sing!" roared the hall in answer.

"Sing out, little scald!" cried some, and others shouted: "First, Oddi; then, Armod."

So Oddi stood forth in the hall, and raised his voice in the lay which opens:

The flames have eaten the merchant town,  
Nidaros the wealthy is burned down—  
Ships on the stocks,  
The King's great docks,  
Skalli and hall,  
Rafters and all.  
From the walls of the borg to the river's side  
Olvir has ruined the city wide.

Armod leaped the interval between them and seized him by the hand.

"A brave song, little scald!" he exclaimed. "I would not be ashamed to own it, myself."

"You would count yourself unusually lucky had you fathered it," retorted Oddi. "For your province is love-rhymes and sad talks about death and lasses with long hair. I know you, Armod!"

And he began singing again before Armod could speak the indignant denial which was on his lips.

Men said afterward the Yule feast at Nidaros was one of the merriest of those days, but beneath the surface fun ran an undercurrent of grim watchfulness that was stirred by eddies of doubt and whirlpools of conflicting ambitions.



AFTER the Yuletide many of the chiefs who had taken guest quarters with King Ingi asked to be excused to return to their homes, promising him to appear at the *Thing* in the spring and furnish him with any assistance he required to resist Eystein's hostility. Among them Gregorius and Erling were included, Gregorius explaining that he deemed it necessary that he should give some supervision to his folk who were repairing the damage Eystein had wrought at Bratsborg, and Erling pleading his wish to become better acquainted with his son.

These latter two extended an invitation to Swain to visit them with his folk, but the Orkneyman declined.

"It is best that one of us should stay by the King," he said bluntly. "Ingi is as honest as most men, and no fool; but he is more to be depended upon when we are with him to stiffen his will."

"That is very true," assented Gregorius. "There are not lacking fellows who would be glad to remove him from our influence."

"But I pray you," said Erling, "commit him to nothing rash, Swain. A mis-step is often more fatal than a defeat."

"You may leave him to me without concern, inasmuch as you are going off to suit your own interests," returned Swain. "I will promise you that at least I shall not endeavor to supplant you two in his confidence."

They both laughed at this gibe.

"It is probable that of us three you are the best-hated," said Gregorius frankly.

"Yes," said Erling, "the outlander is never popular, and your ways are not such as will earn you the affection of men you despise."

"I am what I am," replied Swain. "It was Erling who persuaded me here from the Orkneys where I might have enjoyed myself in viking-faring as I pleased, instead of being obliged to match wits with half the men of rank in Norway."

"And you have remained because the struggle is worthy of your efforts," retorted Erling.

"I am not less proud than other men," spoke up Gregorius: "but I will say frankly to any who ask me, that without Swain we might not have raised Ingi where he is, nor could we have kept him there if Swain had left us."

Swain grunted noncommittally.

"While I am welcome and can be of service, I will stay," he said. "The day that is not true, you will see my back."

The winter passed quietly. There was some raiding and ravaging on both sides, and a number of men of no particular note were slain. In the south Eystein and Olvir raised the Vikenfolk and called up outlaws and wastrels from Sweden and Denmark. They also attempted again to send emissaries through the northern districts, but two of these were taken by indignant *boendr* whose relatives had suffered either at Eystein's or Olvir's hands, and delivered over to King Ingi. He had them slain, and set their heads over the gate of Nidaros borg for a warning to other trouble-makers.

There was much talk in the land throughout the snow months, notwithstanding, and the priests and the merchant folk commenced to say that it was unreasonable for the people to be disturbed and their dwellings burned, their goods stolen, themselves slain perhaps, and all because two Kings could not agree.

"Let the Kings fight it out betwixt themselves," some men said.

"But Ingi is a cripple; he is no match for Eystein," others replied.

"That is his misfortune, not ours," said the first men.

Then a new note was interjected into the discussions which ran from the Naze to the tents of the Lapp sorcerers.

"The trouble is that a few men spur the Kings on for their own benefit," suggested certain of the lendermen cunningly. "They keep the land stirred up and the levies afoot, and from the turmoil they pluck their pouches full of silver marks and augment their landed properties."

When the people had turned this thought over in their minds a while they would answer back.

"What is to be done about it? Who are the men who have profited by the slaying of Sigurd?"

And the cunning lendermen said:

"Why, that is easily to be seen. The three men who have Ingi's ear are Swain, Gregorius and Erling. They have all grown rich."

"Well, they earned it with their swords," argued the fair-minded. "Ingi was obliged to seize Sigurd's property and fine Sigurd's

friends. He had to divide the spoil with somebody."

Now, the trouble-makers shifted the ground of their attack.

"Perhaps it is just that Gregorius and Erling should obtain the land's wealth, but how can it be argued that Swain, who is an outlander, should share above the rest of us? Depend upon it, Swain does not care who rules in Norway so long as he waxes prosperous on the spoils of war. Every month he obtains some new prize. Ingi has just given him one of the three longships that were taken from Olvir in Thronthjem Fjord!"

They did not say that Swain had fought this fight and won it, as was agreed by all fair-minded folk who had witnessed it.

The result of all this hearth talk was that a conviction spread from district to district that whatever else happened the people should endeavor to arrange matters so that the fighting might cease.

"It is a wicked sin if two brothers cannot rule the land in peace," said the priests.

And those lendermen who had not been forward in the slaying of Sigurd and the quenching of his faction, who, in consequence, were no better off than they had been before, lent their support to this view, and they helped the priests to impress the commoner folk that they should refuse to fight, unless it came out that there was no possible way of adjusting the disagreements of the two surviving Kings by peaceable means.

Swain was not ignorant of the intrigues which were under way. He knew how unpopular he was, but it was a peculiarity of his nature that he never cared for any man's opinion. If a man liked him, well and good. If a man disliked him, Swain was utterly heedless. He did not even cherish resentment against such a man unless that man undertook to harm him. Then Swain struck with merciless precision.

"Like me or hate me, but keep your hands off my gear," was a saying of his.

Also, he had in Armod and Oddi, the two scalds, a pair of allies who could pass from one camp to the other, who were friends with all factions, and could just as readily visit the *skallis* of those of Ingi's lendermen who were hostile to Swain as they had Eystein's court in the Fall. So he knew what was planned against him, and in his



own rough, heavy-handed way gave warning to the King.

"There have been folk to see you who gave me a black name," he said curtly.

"Every chief has enemies, Swain," answered the King. "And no matter who dislikes you, I——"

"Oh, I am not questioning your friendship," cut in Swain. "It is to your interest to keep me here. What I thought to warn you of was that you must not altogether discount what these sulky carls say."

"How?" asked Ingí, puzzled. "I have given them fair words, saying only that they misjudged you."

"They did not," said Swain. "But remember what I tell you. They are stronger than you reckon. We shall yet have to meet them, and when the day comes I am not concerned for aught except to keep intact what we have built up in the land."

"That is what they say."

"And do not mean. It is hatred and jealousy which speak through their mouths. Well, King, I am used to such foes. If I bend to them one day, it is so that I shall be the stronger when the right moment comes to stamp them into the earth."

"But you talk as if they might succeed in driving you away," protested the King.

"I do. That is what I mean. If it seems that we can advance what we have begun by resisting them, I will resist. But if it seems that we can make you stronger by bowing to them, I will bow."

"That you shall not, Swain," cried Ingí warmly. "I am no friend to blow hot and cold. I know well what I owe to you, and I will not sacrifice you——"

Swain's fierce blue eyes bored into his like daggers of living light.

"It has pleased me to do what I have done," said the Orkneyman, "and having done it I will do nothing to upset it. These curs cannot hurt me by anything they attempt."

Ingí was unwontedly stubborn.

"This is poor talk," he said. "It is you who have often said that the time to sound a ford is when you come to it."

But Swain would say no more.



IN EASTER WEEK, Erling and Gregorius arrived at Nidaros, and thereafter the chiefs poured in rapidly for the *Thing* which was summoned for the week after. And in order to

give the assemblage the greater authority, Ingí announced that it should meet on the Eyra, the sandy stretch of ground between the river Nid and the sea, for the Eyra *Things* were traditionally the King-making *Things* of Norway; the convocations where fundamental questions of law and justice were settled.

The folk hailed the King's words with eager approval.

"Ingí governs by *Thing*," they said. "Eystein rules with longships."

King Ingí rode to the *Thing* on horseback, with his courtiers to attend him, and Swain saw to it that in addition to the King's regular following there were a dozen of the chief lenders hostile to himself who had places in the party. When they came on to the *Thingstead* it was these latter folk who showed in front, while Swain, Gregorius and Erling stood behind Ingí and were as inconspicuous as possible.

Because his infirmity made it difficult for him to stand alone, the King addressed the *Thing* from his saddle, speaking in words which the three comrades had discussed together for many days.

"I have called the folk here," he said, "in order to be guided by their wishes in what I do. My intention is to rule equally and with regard for the people's rights. I have justice for all; the wealthy and the poor are the same in my sight. And in order to prove that I do not speak lightly I ask you to remember that when my brothers Sigurd and Eystein plotted to overthrow me and deprive me of my property I did not fly to arms, as some would have done, but invited them to a *Thing* at Bergen to settle the matter peaceably."

"True! True talk! Well said! Ingí has done well!"

The murmur came from every quarter of the vast assemblage, an ocean of bearded faces upturned toward the little figure of the crippled King, hunched on the back of his tall war-horse.

"Furthermore," continued Ingí, "at that *Thing* I submitted myself to the people; it was Sigurd who flung himself off, refusing to abide by it. Eystein did not even attend it. Later, still, Sigurd wantonly attacked my friends in Bergen, and slew several. It was after that that I lifted the sword and had him slain. If he was a King, yet he was beyond the law, and an outlaw King is more dangerous than a common

outlaw. He deserves the utmost punishment."

Again, there was a mutter of assent.

"After Sigurd's death," resumed Ingi, "I endeavored to make terms with Eystein. You know the success I have met with. Nidaros town, Gregorius's property at Bratsborg and two score other places tell their own tale. Where we offered peace, Eystein returned us a sword and a torch. What, then? I have defended the land as best I could, and at first I had few to aid me. But the time has come when you must speak out and say what you would have done. Shall we continue to support Eystein's depredations? Or shall we take our weapons and make the land safe to dwell in?"

A thunder of applause answered him, but the common men glanced inquiringly at one another and waited for the better-known chiefs to speak. Aslak Bjorn's son, a lenderman of Gaulardale, stood forward first from among the group who had attended Ingi to the *Thingstead*.

"We are doubly fortunate," he said "in that we have a King who is both vigilant to protect his people and strictly inclined toward justice. Likewise, we must admit that the King has a right to expect us to assist him in his duties. My counsel is that we raise a goodly host to go south with him, but that we make every effort to settle the issue with Eystein without resort to battle. The land has been torn and rent by war for several seasons now, and the folk are sick of bloodshed. It is truly said that if we continue slaying each other there will soon be no men to bear arms."

The cheer that responded to Aslak's speech was louder than that which had applauded the King's, and man after man stood forth to echo his sentiment, lendermen, rich *boendr*, merchants, priests.

"Fight, if we must," they said. "But let us reach a composition of our differences with Eystein, if possible."

Gregorius stooped his head to Swain's.

"We shall not drive Eystein into the sea this summer," said he.

Swain nodded.

"We are on marshy ground," he answered. "Let us walk warily."

Erling, too, joined their conversation.

"If the King is well-advised he will not press his own cause here," he volunteered.

"This is a day for quiet talk."

"You are the best of us three at quiet

talk," growled Swain. "Also, you are the one these carls will heed most patiently. Tell them what is in your mind."

So Erling rode out in front of the people, his ugly face very serious and his speech slow and ponderous, as always; and as Swain had foreseen the folk listened to him readily, principally because of his son who might some day be King. He was regarded the greatest man there after Ingi.

"No man will question that we Norsefolk have had our fill of fighting at home," he said; "but it is occasionally necessary for people to struggle against adversity in order to be able to live honorably. I give credit to King Ingi that he is a generous, kindly ruler, who will never knowingly do harm to any one. He has been put to considerable personal expense by what he has done, and, notwithstanding that, he has borne lightly in his taxes. This is the first considerable levy he has asked you for. I advise that you grant it to him, since it is plain that Eystein will continue to harry us if we do not prove that we can row the boat the other way; and you may leave it to the future to discover a means of reaching a composition with our enemies.

"What is left to the future is spume through the oar-hole," shouted a man.

"The man who looked through the *quoinstone* (millstone) said there was dirt on the underside," quoted Erling. "Be sure of this, Norsefolk, the only way to wring terms out of Eystein without fighting for them is to make it too dangerous for him to venture to fight. Enough armored men can balk any battle."

Other men endorsed Erling's speech, including some of those who had spoken before, and the end of it all was that the *Thing* agreed to raise a full levy for King Ingi's army, and that come what might there should be no talk of peace until Eystein had called for a composition.

"We came well out of that business," said Ingi exultantly as they rode back to the borg.

"Better than we might have done," agreed Swain. "But we are a long way from winning Norway for one King."



THERE was a great rally of folk to King Ingi's banner. They came from all the dales, from the Up-lands and from the seaside, farmfolk and fisherfolk, lenderman and *bondi*, merchant

and peddler, tenant and thrall. And the word of their mustering flashed through the land like a flame and carried consternation to King Eystein, who was already making preparations for warfare, but on a smaller scale. At the first intelligence of the extent of his brother's array he called to his chiefs to equip their longships and take to the sea; but Olvir Rosta and certain others counselled him that if he did so he should lose the respect of the Norsefolk.

"It will be said that your dominion extends to the beak of your dragon, Lord King, and no farther," declared Olvir. "To hold the land you must bide on the land."

So Eystein dispatched messengers in every direction with war-arrows, and called up all those who professed allegiance to him. His host was small by comparison with Ingi's, but it was strong out of proportion to its numbers because its backbone consisted of the viking crews maintained by the King and his courtmen. It was widely claimed in those days that Eystein and his special cronies commanded the most desperate and well-armed body of housecarls in the north. There was no other company to be mentioned in the same breath with them, save Swain's, and the Orkneyman had with him in Norway only a single longship's crew. Therefore, while Ingi's army was much the largest, his own chiefs were not altogether sure in their minds as to what would be the issue if they pushed shields with Eystein's folk.

With the coming of mid-summer Ingi marched south, gathering more men to him from day to day as he moved; and Eystein abandoned his ships and started slowly north to meet him. But despite the size of his host, Ingi moved the most rapidly, and they met in Eystein's country, at the Seleys, near to the Naze, which is well to the eastward.

Ingi was all for an immediate onfall, but the lendemen who had cried soft at the *Eyra Thing* set up their pleas again that he should not spill the blood of his folk if he could compass redress from Eystein for the harm done, and the merchants' levies from Nidaros and Bergen and Kanungahela asserted the same viewpoint.

"Let well enough be," advised Swain when the King turned to him for counsel.

"How?" challenged the lenderman, Aslak Bjorn's son, he who had spoken first at the

*Eyra Thing*, and who was become the leader of those who regarded Swain with suspicion.

"If you can win by talk," answered Swain coldly, "why try to win with weapons?"

This made the peace party uneasy, for they suspected Swain must have some ulterior motive in view when he gave the King counsel similar to theirs, and they began to doubt their own stand.

"It can do no harm to hear Eystein if he has terms to offer," they said defensively.

"Not if he offers terms honorable to King Ingi," replied Swain. "What will you be prepared to accept?"

They put their heads together and consulted, and at last proposed that Ingi should announce his willingness to accept a composition which would include a payment of fines for the damage wrought upon his people and the punishment of the offenders.

"All men know that the chief offenders are King Eystein, himself, and Olvir Rosta, who is an outlander," said Swain mockingly. "How do you propose to punish a King with whom you would treat and a viking outlander who has no property subject to fine—for Olvir's wealth is in ships and men, and where he goes they go, nor will he yield them up to anybody without compulsion?"

Aslak and his friends consulted a second time, and the result was that Aslak came back before King Ingi and spoke thus:

"Swain has asked how we would punish King Eystein and Olvir Rosta, who is an outlander. We answer that for the King we would have him fined, and since Olvir is an outlander we would have him banished from the country. It is not fitting that a man who has no property interest in the land should be allowed to exert such power as Olvir holds. Indeed, we say that it would be better if all outlanders were banished from the country, for it is widely said that they are trouble makers."

King Ingi started angrily, and would have replied to his open complaint against Swain, but Swain took the words from his mouth.

"Perhaps some will say that it is not really Olvir against whom your remarks are aimed, Aslak," he commented. "But as to Olvir, I believe you speak justly, and my counsel to King Ingi is that he should move in the fashion you recommend. Yet to come to terms with Eystein we must first



have an expression from him certifying his willingness to treat."

After more talk the chiefs agreed that it would be undignified for King Ingi, who had the largest army, to make the opening move for peace, and they determined to array their men in the shield-wall and occupy a hill within view of Eystein's position and then await what he should do.

When Eystein saw the long line of helmed men marching on the brow of the hill he thought that they were coming to attack him that instant, and he and his chiefs sounded their horns and formed their own folk in line on a hillock across a little stream which ran beneath the hill on which King Ingi's army stood. And now the two armies faced each other, and Eystein's chiefs perceived more clearly than ever how vastly they were outnumbered.

"If we are outnumbered," answered Olvir to those who expressed their fears, "why does not Ingi attack?"

"The wise chief awaits the right moment," retorted Eystein, himself. "I think better of Ingi that he does not rush into a fight."

"Humph," growled Olvir. "Most of his folk are farmers and fishermen. They could never stand against our housecarls, thick as they are."

"Perhaps," answered Eystein. "But it would not help us to make a great slaughter, and perish in the slaying. I am of a mind to suggest that we come to terms."

"If Ingi grants terms, they will be sour ale on your stomach," warned Olvir.

But Eystein grinned with amusement.

"All promises are not kept," he said.

So he sent two chiefs forward, instructing them to hail his brother, and say that their King, being loath to bring about more deaths in the land, desired to meet Ingi in open *Thing* to strive to compose their differences. There was some talk then between these envoys and King Ingi, and the end of it was that they agreed the two Kings should come to the banks of the stream, each accompanied by twenty of his principal men, and there make effort to reach a composition before sunset. If they failed, Ingi said that he would unfurl his banner and do his best to hew down Eystein and all the viking King's folk.

Ingi rode down to the stream on horseback, but Eystein walked, for he was never at home on a horse, and in fact, was always

more successful in sea-fighting than ashore. With Ingi were Swain, Gregorius and Erling and seventeen others, lendersmen, *boendr*, merchants and two priests. Of the seventeen the greater part were of Aslak's party, and Aslak headed them.

"We are closer together than we have been for many years, brother," said Eystein from his side of the stream.

"There is more than a dozen ells of water between us," answered Ingi. "The stream of blood you have shed is deep as well as wide."

"It cannot truthfully be said that I am the only King in Norway whose hands are bloody," retorted Eystein. "For I, at least, cannot be accused of a brother's death."

"If you and Sigurd had dealt honorably by me, Sigurd would be alive with us to-day," said Ingi.

"Nonetheless, I say that whatever offense I have given you, it has been caused by your action in slaying Sigurd when you had him trapped in Bergen," exclaimed Eystein with heat.

Ingi smiled quietly.

"As to that story, Eystein," he replied, "Sigurd's thought was that he had me trapped. But it is known to all men in the north, and we shall get nowhere by stirring up old arguments. I have come here to discover what you will do to make good the losses you have caused me, and if you have nothing to offer I am content to abide by the judgment of the sword."

"That is not a very friendly speech," answered Eystein uneasily, and while he was speaking Olvir Rosta whispered in his ear. The viking King's face lighted. "You speak as if you were the only sufferer in Norway," he went on. "I have just claims for damages against you on account of Sigurd's death, and the fact that you disregarded me in seizing his possessions."

"Why should I have regarded you?" countered Ingi. "And Sigurd's death was caused by Sigurd."

"What you really seek is my death, also," charged Eystein boldly. "You wish to be King over all the land."

Ingi's eyes flashed, but Swain, standing at his bridle-rein, whispered:

"He pricks you for a purpose. Ride light, King, light!"

And Ingi caught himself up, and said coolly:

"It was not my purpose in riding hither

to listen to recriminations from you. Is it Olvir who puts such thoughts in your mind?"

"If it is," replied Olvir, himself, "I see Swain whispering counsel to you."

Ingi's folk moved restlessly, for they did not like the drift of the debate.

"It is of no moment what the Kings are advised, if they do but deal fairly with each other here," spoke up Aslak Bjorn's son. "And I speak for the folk on both sides of this stream when I say that it is incumbent upon Eystein and Ingi to compose their differences without slaughter, for if our two armies come to a clash there will not be many of us who stand here who will want *skalli* room tomorrow."

"Well said! Well said!" cried the chiefs of both Kings.

"I do not quarrel with what Aslak said," growled Swain.

All eyes turned upon him.

"But I would not have Eystein's folk misunderstand him. If he fears drawn steel——"

"In your teeth!" snarled Aslak.

Swain waved him aside.

"Bide, bide! I say if he fears drawn steel, that is no reason for Eystein to suspect the rest of us of dreading a fight. For myself, I care not how this issue is settled, and the most of us have the same feeling. If King Eystein will repay King Ingi for the harm he has done, and punish the guilty, why, I say well and good. If he will not, in Odin's name let us have done with the talking and crack shields."

And all of Ingi's party shouted assent to this, for those who were most hostile to Swain still perceived that his words were deliberately calculated to bring about a peaceful issue. Even Aslak choked down his passion, and joined the outcry.

Eystein was impressed, and, what was more important, the chiefs with him were persuaded of Ingi's firmness of purpose. Olvir, alone, ventured to protest yielding.

"Talk is all we have had from these carls, King! Speak them firmly."

But the other chiefs gathered close around Eystein, opposing the outlander's advice.

"Olvir is a lone wolf," they said. "We are a pack—and you must think of the pack first, Lord King."

They prevailed, and finally Eystein called to Ingi and inquired what he would consider satisfactory terms.

"I will have payments made to me on account of the destruction in Nidaros," answered Ingi. "Also, Gregorius must be paid a fine for the burning of Bratsborg. And the chief of the men who burned Nidaros must be exiled."

"It was Olvir Rosta, as you must know, who burned Nidaros," replied Eystein. "And seeing that he is an outlander, why must you visit exile upon him?"

"If he is an outlander, perhaps exile will not be so hard upon him," rejoined Ingi. "I will admit that it is not a sufficiently heavy punishment for his crimes."

Olvir stooped his head again, and whispered in Eystein's ear.

"Since you have brought up the question of outlanders," said Eystein, "it is no more than fair that I should ask you to exile the man who is charged with our brother Sigurd's slaughter."

"No, no," cried Ingi. "That is a different matter. We are not discussing the punishment of my folk, but of yours. It was you who did evil deeds, not I."

"All men will not agree with you," returned Eystein stubbornly. "It was not necessary for Sigurd to be slain."

"If I had not had Sigurd slain he would have been the death of you, as well as me," retorted Ingi.

"I can guard my own head," answered Eystein. "And I say again that if I pay fines and exile my servants I shall expect you to punish the man who dipped his hand in a King's blood. It is not well to show honor to a man who is called 'Kingsbane.'"

"You ask the impossible," said Ingi.

"Very well," said Eystein. "I have endeavored to meet you halfway. I am content to leave the issue between us to the judgment of our folk."

And he made as if he would walk away. Ingi's chiefs surged forward around his horse.

"Would you bring about a battle for Swain's sake?" cried Aslak.

And others called—

"We will never fight for Swain, Lord King!"

"Why should Norsemen be slain in an outlander's cause?"

Swain, himself, stayed the outbursts with a lifted hand.

"Said I not that I would be content to bow when the time for bowing came?" he asked the King. "Indeed, these men should

be heeded, for I am not of those who wish myself upon a King unless I can earn my place."

"You are the best friend I have, Swain," protested Ingi. "None of these men has done for me what you——"

"He who is cast down by ingratitude leads an unhappy life," quoth Swain. "I have done what I have done to please myself. Be guided by me now, and agree with Aslak and his friends."

"Never!" cried the King.

"Then will I leave you of my own accord," replied Swain. "For look you, I am of a mind to plan so that all Norway some day shall own the one King, and in pressing such a plan—as in pressing all great plans—the time comes occasionally when the wisest course is to yield. Give in to these fools, and employ the breathing space you gain thereby to extend your power and promote your interests. I, too, shall not be idle, and when the moment comes—we will take up the slack of the anchor and out oars and drive a head again."

"But they would have me make you an outlaw!"

Swain grinned in his ruddy beard.

"It will not be the first time I have lived outside the law—and I do not believe their outlawry or yours will run in the Orkneyar. No, then, I will make use of my outlawry to pursue another outlaw. If Olvir thought to injure me by prodding Eystein to demand my exile, he will find he has only drawn me free to hound him wherever he turns his prows. Go on, King. Consent to banish me. For I tell you that in any case I should leave you to fare after Olvir."

King Ingi shook his head sadly.

"This is an ill day for me, Swain," he said. "I thought to win a victory, and I find I must sacrifice the one man who had no self-interest in advising me."

The crippled King reined his horse forward to the very margin of the stream, facing Eystein, who had halted his retreat when he saw the division of counsel in the opposing ranks.

"Hear me," said Ingi sternly. "You would barter with me, Eystein. So be it! We will set off Swain's banishment against Olvir's banishment. But unless you agree to the fine I claim for the wickedness you have committed I will cry on my folk, slaughter or no slaughter, and we will roll you all underfoot."

Armod, the scald, said afterward that he had never seen King more kingly than crippled Ingi in that moment.

Eystein quailed noticeably.

"I will agree to a just fine," he began.

"The fine," said Ingi, "shall be thirty marks of gold to be paid to me on account of the burning of Nidaros, and fifteen marks of gold to be paid to Gregorius for the destruction of Bratsborg."

Eystein gulped. It was a prodigious sum.

"Do you agree?" demanded Ingi, hand to sword.

"Yes," growled Eystein, but under his breath he repeated to himself what he had said to Olvir earlier: "All promises are not kept."

It was further agreed that the fines should be payable at Bergen on All Saints Day next, and that Olvir and Swain should go into outlawry at once; and with this the two Kings separated, and led their armies away.



NEITHER Ingi nor Eystein was pleased with what had occurred.

Eystein chafed at thought of the fine he had obligated himself to pay, albeit secretly he intended to evade it, and was likewise wroth at the superior strength Ingi had demonstrated, for he was accustomed to think of his brother as a weakling and had shared with Sigurd an intention to rob Ingi of all power and wealth—and even as Sigurd had planned later to destroy Eystein, so Eystein had meant to rid himself of Sigurd. But as matters fell out, Ingi had been the death of Sigurd, and had obtained the dead King's wealth to augment his own, and with the advice of Swain, Gregorius and Erling, had rapidly increased his power.

But to Ingi his composition with Eystein seemed an abatement of that power. He would have naught to do with Aslak and the other chiefs who has been hostile to Swain, and who, themselves, were dissatisfied because their elimination of Swain had not given them any stronger position at court. For Gregorius and Erling advised the King as they had formerly, and by judicious distribution of lands and moneys obtained the adherence of various important men to their party, and in short, endeavored in every way to continue the plans which Swain had formed for making Ingi supreme in Norway. But they were the first to admit that their task was beyond them. In fact, the one man who was not



displeased by the issue of the meeting of the two Kings at the Seleys was Swain.

"It is time I attended to my own affairs," he said in parting with King Ingi at Bergen. "I have two sons to educate, and farms which will be better for my attention."

"But you will come back to us, Swain!" pleaded the King.

Swain tugged thoughtfully at his beard.

"In time," he said. "In time. Let the land lie fallow this year and next. You have naught to fear from Eystein. He will not pay his fine, I think; but you can arrange that in some other way. Let him be. He will harry the southland folk. Yes, you have naught to fear from him—for a while. And when your lenders and *boendr* have learned that they cannot have peace with two Kings, why, send for me. Perhaps I will come. Perhaps not. I must see how the Orkney Jarls are ruling our island folk. After all, I owe first thought to them."

He sailed west that summer and came to his estates on Gairsey in the Orkneys, and trading folk who passed back and forth between the Western Lands and Norway reported that the Orkney folk gave him a great home-coming. That fall and winter he passed in the harvesting of his lands and administration of his interests, but the next

spring he put to sea with six longships and sailed east through the Baltic to Gardariki (Russia) in pursuit of Olvir Rosta, who had gone to take service with the King of that country. Olvir fled from him without awaiting battle, and went into the lands of the heathen Letts, where he disappeared from ken for such a length of time that it was commonly said he was dead. But when Swain returned from Gardariki he laughed at these reports.

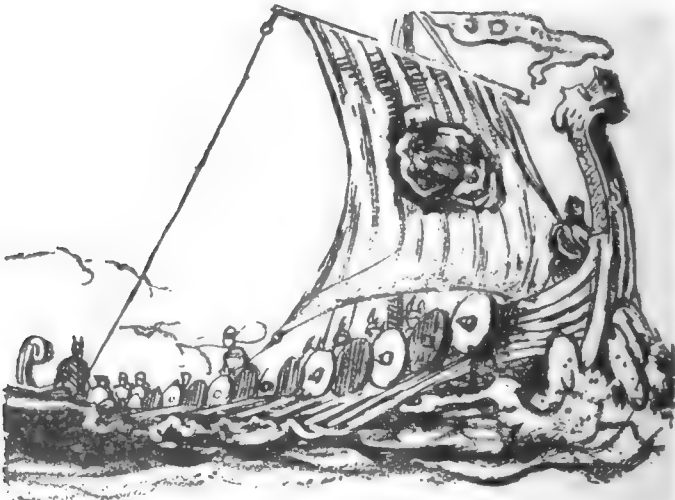
"Olvir's death will come about at my hands," he said; "and in no other way. We shall hear of him someday and, it may be, in Norway."

The Orkneyfolk asked him if he intended to try his luck again in King Ingi's service.

"It is possible, but not yet," he said. "I follow the ravens, and they are not flying towards Norway this year."

So he remained in the Orkneys and attended to his own affairs on Gairsey and in Caithness on the Scots main, where he also held property. He was much looked up to, and when a man one day asked Jarl Harald, who then ruled in the Orkneys, what he would do if any complaint came from King Eystein because Swain's outlawry was not heeded in the islands, the Jarl replied:

"If Swain is an outlaw, so am I."



# The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all  
meeting place  
for readers,  
writers and  
adventurers.



Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of heaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

**C**AN hair turn white from fright? Here's some testimony in the affirmative:

Iowa Falls, Iowa.

In the early winter of 1897 I was in Regina, N. W. T., where I was recovering from an attack of typhoid fever. I contracted a cold which, settling on my lungs, left me in bad shape. When I got able I ran down to Grand Forks, N. D., where I had some friends, and while there I consulted with a Dr. Wheeler who advised me to go to a warmer climate.

**I** WENT down to Minneapolis where I met a young Scotchman I had known for some time. He suggested that I go to the north woods and, after thinking the matter over, we shipped with the Weyerhaeuser Lumber Co. and after a few days we arrived at our Camp No. 2, which was up near the Canadian line. I hired as foreman of swampers and my friend as hook man. Our camp foreman (a man) was named Fred Larson. My partner and I gathered balsam boughs for our bunk and, receiving good blankets, made a very comfortable bed. I seemed to feel better the first night and was soon eating like a

horse. We were having heavy snows and along in January it was about five feet on the level. We had to get oxen to snake out the logs as horses were not much use in that depth of snow.

It was in the latter part of January when the incident took place which I will never forget. Before I tell this I wish to state that I was thirty years old at the time, had dark brown hair, also that my mother and father were nearly seventy before their hair turned.

**O**NE evening Fred Larson, the boss, said to me, "You take Old Bill and go to No. 1 Camp and get a scoot which the Company smith has made." For the benefit of those who do not know what a scoot is will say it is something like the runners of a bob-sleigh, only it turns up more in front. It is used to pile logs on to snake them out of the woods. I started at daylight the next morning with the horse, Old Bill. He had a large bunch on his hind leg and had not been worked for some time. I was feeling fine and did not ride Old Bill as the boss had suggested. The weather was very cold but clear. I arrived at No. 1 Camp about noon and discovered

that the blacksmith had been sick and it was nearly evening before he finished the scoot and I started back. They called it sixteen miles between camps. Part of the way the tote-road ran through a district which had been burned over and there was no timber except thick undergrowth.

After I had gone a short distance I found that the scoot would run into Old Bill when it caught on any obstruction, so I stopped and took a chain which was on it and wrapped it under the runner. That seemed to work all right and I had gone several miles when, going down a sharp hill, it caught and, bounding back, struck Bill's leg and broke that bunch. There was a heavy discharge of dark, bloody matter.

I HAD not gone far when I heard a wolf howl off to my right. Soon I heard others, seemingly from all directions. Old Bill would stop and prick up his ears and I will not attempt to describe my feelings. I thought my time had come. No gun, no tree big enough to climb, I thought the wolves had scented the blood from Old Bill. We had not gone far when there was a thundering crash to my right and across the tote-road jumped a buck deer with the wolves all around him. It was nearly light as day and I will never forget that sight. The buck's tongue was hanging out and the hair of those wolves seemed to be a foot long. The chase was soon ended, as I could hear them fighting over the remains in the underbrush. How long Old Bill and I stood in that tote-road I have no idea.

AS NEAR as I can describe my feeling I could say I seemed to freeze from the top of my head to my toes. Finally Old Bill started. He went as fast as he could and I was right with him. I arrived at my camp in the early morning and the boss said I could sleep until noon. That afternoon my partner met me and said, "What is the matter with your hair?" I said, "Nothing that I know of." That evening I borrowed a little mirror from the camp cook and discovered that I had a streak of white about one inch wide, extending from the crown of my head to my temple. I have often read articles from learned M.D.'s stating that fright would not cause the hair to whiten. I can not agree with them on this matter. I came out of the woods in March enjoying the best of health. Fred Larson asked me one day what happened to Old Bill as he was down in the hovel and they had to shoot him. I did not give him much information except to say that the bunch on his leg broke. If I live to be a hundred I will never forget that night's experience.—GLEN E. ELY.

**SOMETHING** from Wm. P. Barron concerning his story in this issue:

New York City.

Along the banks of the Mississippi which are shifting or stable, flat or high marshy or cane broidered, depending on the location, dwell a unique people of variegated colors, who gain a lazy, more or less comfortable livelihood from or on its tawny waters.

And the mystery, romance and adventure offered by the mighty river has only been touched on here and there by American writers, the exception, of course, being Mark Twain. However, you won't get the atmosphere (or shall I say kick) of the

Father of Waters by going up and down the river in a steamboat. You must loaf along in a motorboat or better yet get a mosquito proof houseboat, then take weeks instead of days to the task.

Did I say task? Well, I mean pleasure excursion, for so it will prove if you approach the river properly.

The various incidents in the story "Mississippi Moonshine" are true happenings, being narratives gleaned from "dry agents" or "Federalized cops" as the colored bootleggers call them. The Gospel boat is not imaginative either, but its type such as I have described may be found at intervals along the river.

The "Conjur hoop" is also a reality. I have found many of them in various forms in the homes of southern negroes. Sir Richard Burton, an authority on African superstitions, says that a negro never really loses his African superstition, no matter how remote his African ancestry nor how civilized he may have become.

African superstition is a fascinating hobby to which I am strongly addicted. Some day I mean to write a story with these age old beliefs as a background.

So then—*Adios!* If the Camp-Fire gang enjoys reading "Mississippi Moonshine" as much as I enjoyed accumulating the material for the story, I shall be glad all over again.—WM. P. BARRON.

**THIS** good word for our magazine is printed without apology. There have been plenty more to the same effect and it's only fair once in a while to pass a sample on to you. You like the magazine or you wouldn't read it. One of the reasons you like it is because it's clean. You won't mind hearing that cleanness endorsed by a mother of children. That kind of endorsement considered alongside endorsement from husky, red-blooded men is something for all of us to feel proud of. If Camp-Fire had such a thing as a motto it might be "We're clean and can knock — out of any one that don't like it!" Or perhaps, expressed more chastely, "We're clean and don't give a —!"

Oakland, California.

Pardon this untidy letter written on the first sheet of paper handy; carelessness is due to the attention my household and four babies need.

**FIRST** read your magazine years ago when as a girl I took a trip to Hawaii to recuperate from my law practise; bought it at the newsstands ever since until two years ago, when I became a subscriber. While I have never wanted to be a man, I have always wanted their freedom and am glad to see we are getting it. Couldn't help smiling at the letter of the lady who said your magazine was getting sex morbid and at your little explosion; so like the genus man and decided to pour a little balm on the wound to your vanity. (Hope you can read this. My two-year-old is crawling all over this, helping me write.)

I come from a book-loving family which has always kept oodles of magazines and it may please you to hear that to date, on account of my children,



I have cancelled all of them except *Adventure*, the only one I could find which did not raise sex questions in their mind and which I have no fear to leave around. Children are sexless up to a certain age and they love stories and I think should have them. Incidentally will tell you that your magazine gave me back all the faith I have in men. Lads that love to hike or fight or get into deviltry so joyfully are not entirely morally bad, for if they write like that, they think like that. Wish I had time to explain, but it's time for the rest to come from school. However, I love your stories and so do the babies. As my 13-year-old daughter says, there is no foolishness about them and she just loves *Everhard* and I'd rather have her like a hero like that than Valentino's *Sheik* which the rest of her class adore; so just ignore the ladies all you want and give us action in a fair if not always good cause and it shall delight the young and old, and when you get another letter like the one that made you angry, remember the old pioneer woman who followed their men and those of today, who are at the side of their husbands and who appreciate your stories.—Mrs. ———.

### SOMETHING from Harold Lamb about his story in this issue:

Berkeley, California.

So far as the undersigned knows, the yarn of Paul Jones's last sea fight has never been spun—in fiction in this country. There were reasons.

THE events of the story follow history closely; with the exception of *Pierre Pillon*, *Kalil* and one or two minor characters, these people all lived and took part in the events in the Black Sea. The characters of Prince Potemkin, Nassau and Alexiano are not overdrawn.

Paul Jones's service in Russia and the Black Sea is significant. It represents the first experience of an American—a citizen of the United States in the old world. Paul Jones was the first of the brood of our youngsters to adventure "East." Before this the tide had set the other way; men from the old world tackling the unknown in the new.—HAROLD LAMB.

HERE are more of our letters from pioneers of the old West, testifying in the matter of Stuart Henry's criticism, in the *International Book Review*, of the accuracy of Emerson Hough's local color in "North of 36." The *International Book Review*, as you will remember, later published some similar testimony from pioneers defending Hough and taking strong exception to Mr. Henry's criticism. The many letters received by *Adventure* make final the verdict that the criticism was not well founded and that Emerson Hough stands vindicated as a faithful portrayer of the West he loved so well and knew so intimately.

Quite aside from the controversy itself, these letters are of both interest and value. They come from those who knew the old West at first-hand, have decided historical

value and present a living picture of days that are slipping into the past so rapidly that before long we can know of them only through written records and hearsay.

FROM Charles A. Siringo, whose name is very thoroughly identified with the early days of the West:

Lynwood, California.

In regard to Mr. Stuart Henry's criticism of Emerson Hough's masterful story, I would like to call him down in *Adventure* on a few of his silly, high-brow statements.

MR. HENRY states that almost no one now lives who saw the Chisholm Trail or that early village of Abilene, Kansas. He certainly must be an ignorant writer to let his pen go off half-cocked in such a manner. The writer has more than a hundred friends still living who drove up the Chisholm Trail—some of them to Abilene, Kansas, and many beyond that hurrah cow-town. There are more than a thousand of these old boys, who could "ride anything that wore hair" in their younger days, still alive. A list of their names could be secured from Mr. George W. Saunders, President of the Old Trail Drivers' Association, San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Saunders has made several trips up the trail, and is now at the head of the George W. Saunders Live Stock Commission Company and of the Union Stock Yards, in San Antonio.

Mr. Henry states that no cattle were driven within 600 miles of the Canadian line. That statement makes me feel sorry for Mr. Henry, as no one but an ignoramus would make such an assertion in the face of facts which could have been dug up by a schoolboy.

Bud Wilkerson, now living in the little city of Roswell, New Mexico, and whom the writer counts as one of his dearest friends, drove thousands of cattle into Alberta, Canada, from the Pecos Valley in New Mexico in the '80's. These cattle were owned by George Littlefield, the wealthy banker of Austin, Texas, the manager being Phelps White, at present a respected resident of Roswell.

AS TO the cheapness of cattle in Texas after the Civil War, I will state that my mother sold her cattle in 1868 for one dollar a head and the calves thrown in free. The truth is there was no market for cattle, and no prospects for a change until the Chisholm Trail started in 1867, at which time the United States Government through Major Shinklin of Wichita, Kansas, employed Jesse Chisholm to open a trail through the Indian Territory. From now on cattle began to increase in value until 1872 when a grown steer was worth ten dollars and a yearling two dollars.

IN "NORTH of 36" the swimming of swollen rivers in the Indian Territory is described in a truthful manner. During the months of May and June the Red River, Wichita, North and South Canadians, and Cinnamon and Salt Fork of the Arkansas were most always roaring torrents from the melting snow and spring rains far to the westward.

In passing through the Indian Territory the wild blanket Indians from the Reservations to the

westward gave the trail crews much trouble, often stampeding the cattle at night, so that while the cowboys were up in the lead trying to stop the stampede the reds would kill steers from the "drags" in the rear of the herd. The writer knows of one case where four herds became mixed up in one of these stampedes caused by these Indians, who wore no clothes, excepting "breech-clouts" with two long strings hanging down behind and a Government blanket hanging over their arms or shoulders.

Emerson Hough in his story "North of 36" didn't make the trouble with the Indians strong enough.—  
CHARLES A. SIBINGO.

THE following is a letter to the Hon. H. L. Humphrey of Abilene from the Hon. E. C. Little, lieutenant-colonel of the 20th Kansas in the Spanish-American War, afterward consul-general at Cairo, Egypt, and now representing the first Kansas district in Congress. It appeared in the *Pioneer* and is given here by their courtesy:

Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR HUMPHREY:

Replying: My article on Wild Bill is found at pages 578 to 587 of the June number of *Everybody's Magazine* for 1901, and was illustrated by James M. Preston. I will endeavor to send you a copy of it, or rather to send one to the Public Library in Abilene, where it will be available for preservation, if they care for it, and where you can use it.

REFERRING to Stuart Henry's discussion of Emerson Hough's book: I saw that discussion in the *Literary Digest's International Book Review*, and also saw a reply from Eugene Manlove Rhodes, one of the best of the romance writers of the Southwest. There were a few sod houses in Abilene in the early days, but no mud houses, which are adobes. When the Texas cattle trade began to reach Abilene in 1867 there were none of the surroundings of a great cattle market, of course. They came later as did Wild Bill, one of the greatest figures of the border.

The lady on the outskirts of the town, Mrs. Phillips, wasn't a good Methodist; she was a good Presbyterian. I remember that very distinctly because my father was the first Presbyterian elder and the wine for the sacrament Mrs. Phillips wanted to supply from the saloon of her two sons and the others preferred to get their wine from Kansas City. She was a very nice lady and her boys were very good to her. The banquet concerning the cattle arrival took place later in the season than June. Mr. Hough's story needed the settings and surroundings of a year or so later than the first herd and the novelist filled them in a little ahead of time.

MR. HENRY came to Abilene in the very early history of the city and obtained his ideas from observing the situation himself at the mature age of eight or ten years, and from the disadvantages of sitting by my side in the little stone schoolhouse in 1871 during Wild Bill's authority, and also by spending several years in Europe and writing a book about the ladies in the theaters of Paris, which I think a trifle affected his view of his earlier surroundings.

Personally, I very distinctly remember at least one Abilene mother who, with her four daughters, in my judgment easily at least ranked with anybody that Mr. Henry or I saw in Paris or anywhere else in Europe in all the elements which made them worthy of a high place in society or romance.

I am sure that any suggestions made by Mrs. John P. Quinn, whom I remember very well, would be accurate. She had a very lovely younger sister. What has become of her? She stopped a runaway team at a picnic and quite distinguished herself. My own recollection is of quite a number of sod homes which I thought had been there in '67, but Mrs. Quinn says not.

MR. HENRY is posted somewhat on Abilene society, because he and my brother Will and I in the ordinary course of our day's travels up and down Mud Creek, once ran into a little picnic the Hersey girls were giving on the east side of the creek just south of the place where First Street crosses the bridge. We were permitted to participate and given our dinner on account of our part in carrying water for the picnic and treated with very kindly courtesy by those nice little girls. I think Ella Hersey was the oldest. Mr. Henry should have shown more consideration for their memories in his criticisms of the lack of material for romance in Abilene's early days, in my opinion.

Tim Hersey, their father, built the mill on the east side of Mud Creek, to the rafters of which Charlie Thompson and a mob hung the murderer of Elziser. My brother Will discovered that murder by looking through the tailor shop window and finding the corpse. We rose in the morning and looked across the prairie to the mill and had a perfect view of the swinging figure which was left there alone to await the break of morn, looking toward the sunrise with unseeing eyes.

I ESPECIALLY deplore Mr. Henry's remark concerning "the grim life of those wiry frontiersmen of the cattle-camp and the prairie schooner." He says, "They were gaunt, homely, hungry, leading a rawbone and rawhide existence. Many excellent traits had they, but their life was necessarily hard even to sordidness. They and their few womenfolks furnished figures too weazened, weary, forlorn for the bouyant pages of adolescent pageantry. They would not feel at home in the West that Mr. Hough depicts."

He and I differ considerably in our recollections of the golden days of our childhood on the far frontiers among the pioneers and cattle-men. The boys I saw were bright, bold, fearless and adventurous young fellows, well fitted to contest for existence on the far prairies where the buffalo and the big steers appeared constantly on their boyish horizons and where men from all parts of the world assembled to bring the Texas cattle a thousand miles across the prairie.

Why, doesn't Stuart remember the county fair on the Bell farm in the Fall of '71 when Frank Hoyt rode the big horses in the races for the gamblers and cattle-men on the day before the evening on which Wild Bill killed the two men at the Alamo? How could a man who wants to write books leave Abilene and go to Paris looking for adventures and romance and wonderful people? Those boys lived in the very path of the most vivid days of life and adventure.

THE girls I saw were quite fitted for their comradeship. They were sweet, fearless, rosy and fragrant, springing from the very fountain of youth itself. The many years I have lived and the some travels I have made through courts and camps, in palaces and battlefields, in four great continents and in the islands of the sea, have never so dazzled my eyes that I have forgotten, for example, the lovely, charming, refined little lady of twelve years who did credit and honor to our hospitality when the big Indian chiefs visited and sat in the little stone school with us, by producing a big red apple from her dinner basket and without awaiting permission, suddenly tripping over to the big chief and presenting it to him with the same charming grace that marks the loveliest of her sex in cabins and drawing-rooms, alike. Hattie Augustine died fifty years ago. The Venus in the Louvre, the Venus in the Vatican, have never usurped that little figure, born in the purple, in my mind's eye. Mr. Henry and I lived in Abilene fifty odd years ago.

"When all the world was young, lad,  
And all the trees were green,  
And all the geese were swans, lad,  
And every lass a queen."

I AM profoundly grieved that Stuart Henry doesn't remember things as they were in that fairyland of adventure and romance, of stirring events and stirring men, and prefers to pick his heroes and heroines from the dusty theaters and soiled drawing-rooms of the French capital. Presently he and I may wish to return to the homes of our mothers. We will wish we could

"Creep home and take our place there,  
Our early friends among.

God grant we find one face there,  
We loved when all was young."

Since 1871 in Abilene most of my life has been somewhat dull, drab, commonplace, unromantic, unexciting and prosaic.

"The palm tree waveth high  
And fair the myrtle springs,  
And sweetly to the Indian girl,  
The bulbul softly sings.

"But I canna see the broom  
With its tassels on the lea,  
And I canna hear the linties sing  
Of my ain countree.

"There's a way across the deep  
And a path beyond the sea,  
But the weary ne'er return  
To their ain countree."—E. C. LITTLE.

AT THE writer's request only his initials are signed to this letter:

Paris, Texas.

The writer was born in Texas in 1851 and has spent his life here, except some short intervals. Have read a great deal of the writings on Texas, by pioneers, have known many of these pioneers and talked with them and have personal knowledge of some of the things making up Texas history, manners and customs.

THE best and most faithful portrayal of ranching life and events of the West is the "Virginian" of Owen Wister; the next best are the stories of Eugene Manlove Rhodes, notably his *Johnny Dines* stories, and especially, the "Stepsons of Light."

Mr. Henry's criticisms of "North of 36" are too sweeping and betray less knowledge of the day and time than the work he criticises so strongly.

He objects: To the number of cattle in the drive; to its being financed by a "dead broke" and to its lack of experienced drivers. Yet the herd which actually pioneered the way and the man who carried it through were all within his objections.

JOHN S. CHISUM (not Chisholm) was pure American, of that old "North State" breed which pioneered the Cumberland Gap trail into the "dark and bloody ground" of Kentucky. His father, Claiborne Chisum, came to Texas in 1816, finally settling in Lamar County, where he died and his home place is now within the limits of the city of Paris. John S. Chisum was his oldest son and, when about 22 or 23 years of age, was elected the second County Clerk of Lamar County. When his term of office ended, he gathered together a bunch of cattle and established a ranch in what is now Denton County, and which was then a wide open Indian country.

AT THE close of the Civil War (1865) Texas, and everybody in it, was in a dead broke condition with no prospects ahead, except those which their own efforts would create. Cattlemen were especially broke, and Mr. Hough's picture of conditions is not exaggerated one bit.

There were no pensions; no "adjusted" compensations for four years of war; no acts of Congress for relief of distressed farmers or cattlemen and there were very few banks—only one here and there in the larger towns with no funds to finance anything.

If they had waited for "experienced drivers with considerable money or credit," there never would have been a cow-trail to Abilene or elsewhere. Nobody had any money and no man had ever taken a large herd across unknown country through "wild and woolly" Indian ranges, and no man in Texas had the necessary cash or credit—only cattle and no visible market.

But to these upstanding Americans and Texans anything could be tried once. They had the grit to dare, and the spirit and courage that said "quit" in the face of trouble and dire financial conditions no more than they had said "quit" on the bloody battle-front of four long years. They had their indomitable spirit and their two hands, and that was enough.

John Chisum, pioneer and of pioneer stock, without experience of the long trail, without money or credit, with only his courage and will blazed the trail; and this was how he did it.

DURING the four years of war, cattle had gone on increasing, wandering where they willed, so that all the lands west of the settlements swarmed with cattle, four years and under, without mark or brand, as well as many older under brand.

John Chisum proposed to owners, in the same hard fix as himself, that he would gather a herd and walk it to market (they were even uncertain whether or not the cattle as property of "ex-rebels" would be confiscated if they got through), and when



he returned he would settle with the brand owners by the said tally. Unbranded cattle gathered would be his. He also proposed to the men, men just out of the army, youths just coming to manhood, that if they would work for him in gathering and driving the cattle through, they should have a share in the venture.

There were plenty of horses, each man had his riding equipment, and they took him up, owners and men.

All they needed was the slim line of supplies they carried, and he managed to obtain these.

**HE DROVE**, I have been told, about 4,000 head, found the market, came back, settled up with everybody and then bought and gathered another herd, which he put under the famous "fence rail" brand, and drove it west, establishing another new trail, through the Indian country of West Texas, to New Mexico, where he established a ranch and where he lived until his death.

He was the same John Chisum who captained one of the factions in the well known "Lincoln County War" of New Mexico.

So it was the pioneer American, John S. Chisum, and not the half-breed Jess Chisholm, who blazed the cattle trail to Abilene.

**THERE** may have been a Jess Chisholm, half-breed and horse- and whisky-runner, who had a route into or across the Indian Territory to Kansas. There were such routes. They were not marked out as trails because of the secret purposes for which they were used—to run Kansas and Missouri horses to Texas and Texas horses to Kansas and Missouri, but these routes were into the settled eastern part of Kansas and into Missouri and not as far West as Abilene. These trails were also used by whisky-runners who carried on this forbidden traffic with the Indians of the five tribes.

Mr. Hough may well have been misled in this; at any rate it was not Jess Chisholm, half-breed, but John Chisum, American and much the better man, who blazed the way.

So Mr. Hough was wrong as to the blazer of the trail and Mr. Henry is wrong in saying that could not be done which one resolute Texan did do.

**MR. HENRY** objects that there were too many cattle.

A large herd could be carried as easily as a small one; it is only a question of men enough and with as small a herd as 1,000 it would have required an extra large force to stand off Indians and make it safe. Just the number of men to handle the cattle never would have gone through. Also 1,000 cattle would not have given enough returns for the risk, but 4,000 cattle could have been handled, the Indians taken care of and a good profit made, and this was done.

Steers and cows: When a herd was made up exclusively of "steers" it was generally called a "beef herd." "Steers" may have been used under circumstances, but not usually, as a generic term, and when the herd was mixed it was usually called "cows"—the owner was a "cowman" and the men "cowboys." In the south part of the State, where Mexican terms were used, the men were frequently called "Vaqueros." V and B being interchangeable in Spanish, "vaquero" became Americanized into "buccaro," and "caballado" into "cavyard."

The woman in the book: Was by far safer on the trail, surrounded by her devoted men folks, than she would have been alone at Laguna del Sol at the mercy of the gangs who infested Texas under carpet-bagger leadership, leadership well depicted by Mr. Hough in the villain of his story.

**EXTENT** of trails: Once established that there was a market for cattle at the end of the trail, cattle began moving (and establishing trails) from every cattle section of Texas. There was a well-known trail from Western Gulf Coast country via San Antonio, Kerrville, Buffalo Gap on to the Chisum crossing of Red River. From Abilene trails were opened northward as far as there was a cattle range—into Nebraska, the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana. Being where Abilene, Texas, now stands, when the railhead of the Texas & Pacific was nearing that point, I saw a herd of about 3,000 South Texas cattle pass that way on their route to Wyoming. So that, eventually, this, the last marching route of the nomads, did extend from the Gulf practically to our northern boundary.

I fear Mr. Henry's zest for absolute historical accuracy has led to too harsh a review of a work of fiction and he certainly has not drawn any more correct inferences than the writer he takes exception to. As a delineator of the poverty-stricken conditions in Texas, of the date he writes, Mr. Hough was correct.—W. F. G.

**FROM** H. L. Humphrey, of Abilene, Kansas, mentioned above. Published in the *Abilene Daily Reflector* and later by the *Pioneer*:

Stuart Henry of New York who was a boy here in Abilene in the early '70's says in his critique that Abilene in 1867, when the Texas cattle trade began, had no dance halls, no brass band, no bridge, no hotel, no livery stables, only one or two saloons instead of several. It was a hamlet of perhaps ten mud huts.

**WE** DO not know where Mr. Henry obtained his information about Abilene, but his description of the town is farther from the real facts than any part of Emerson Hough's story. There is a woman living in Abilene, Mrs. J. P. Quinn, who has been in the county since 1860 and a resident of Abilene since 1864. She says there were no "mud huts" in Abilene, not even a sod house, as there was sufficient timber along Mud Creek so that substantial log houses were built by the settlers up to the coming of the Union Pacific in March, 1867. At that time there was only one frame house on the townsite, a shanty owned by "Old Man Jones," standing where the Security Mills office now is and which was built of boards set on end.

**AS TO** hotels, C. H. Thompson, who was one of the owners of Thompson & McCoy's Addition, had a log house called "The Hotel" on the east bank of the creek where the Overland Trail crossed. He took care of the passengers and the horses for the Short Line stage and others stopped there for meals. On the west side of the creek, Tim Hershey, who was station keeper for the Butterfield Overland Express, had two log houses, a stable and a corral for horses. He had a contract to feed the passengers who came in the six-horse Concord coaches. No

less personages than Horace Greeley and Bayard Taylor had their feet under Hershey's dinner table. Hershey also took care of the spare horses which were changed here.

About a block east of the creek at the corner of Walnut and Texas Streets, was the Frontier Store, owned by W. S. Moon, who was postmaster for several years, and in this store was also the first office of the registrar of deeds. Court was also held here. There were probably ten or twelve other log cabins east of the creek, some of the families then living here being McClain, Chapman, Van Santz and Callahan, a brother of Jim Callahan who lived up the creek.

AS SOON as the railroad was completed and lumber was available, frame houses went up rapidly to provide for housing railroad men, cattlemen, merchants and other new settlers. In July, 1867, the first section of the Drovers' Cottage was opened with rooms for 50 to 75 guests. Col. Saunders says that 35,000 cattle were driven into Abilene in 1867. That probably meant that 700 to 1,000 cowboys came up the trail and with the cattle buyers from the East, carpenters, railroad men, proprietors of stores and restaurants, saloon men and gamblers, Abilene must have been a right lively town in the Fall of '67, not much like Stuart Henry's pipe dream of "ten mud huts."

IT IS not expected that a historical novel will be strictly accurate. Emerson Hough in "North of 36" seeks to portray the first drive of cattle to Abilene in 1867 and also brings in the most noted character of that period, James B. Hickok, who was city marshal in 1870 and 1871, so the story necessarily combines some of the conditions here in 1867 and 1870.

Stuart Henry says that no women came over the trail. But Mrs. Quinn remembers two families by the name of Crossan in which there were two women and two small children who made the long trail from Texas with a herd of cattle.—H. L. HUMPHREY.

FROM Ike T. Pryor, of San Antonio, by courtesy of the *Pioneer*:

San Antonio, Texas.

The adverse criticism of Stuart Henry on "North of 36," is so absurd and ridiculous that it hardly deserves the notice it is receiving. No living man could write such a realistic and true story without having had personal experience as a trail-driver, cow-puncher and cattleman.

I CAME to Texas in 1870 and enlisted wholeheartedly into this business. No class of men ever endured more hardships or were exposed to more danger than they, and the temptation to become dishonest was ever present because cattle would wander many miles from their owner's range and become "strays." Eighty per cent. of these animals, or the value thereof in money, would eventually find its way to the owner.

Few, if any, herds of cattle that were driven up the trail to the Northwestern States and territories reached their destinations without having picked up some "strays." The owner of the herd almost invariably took a correct tally of these "strays" and when he found the owner of them (if he did not already know him), he would settle for the cattle, and

hundreds of thousands of dollars of this kind of money changed hands during the period from 1870 to 1890.

IN 1884 I lost on the trail from various causes about fifteen hundred head of cattle out of fifteen herds aggregating 45,000 head. I honestly believe within a few years after I had lost these cattle I had received pay for most of them, handed to me or sent me by the men who picked them up, and many of these men I did not know, but they knew my brand, knew where I lived and sent me the money for my cattle they turned in on their contract.

These pioneers made good in every sense of the word and are leaving a heritage in words and deeds that in time will brighten the pages of Texas history as no other class of citizens can hope to do.—IKE T. PRYOR.

ANOTHER suggested origin of the American Indians—a migration from the east. Also a captain and his son who stayed too long on a spar.

Naples, New York.

Dr. P. Anther in the June 20th issue takes a fling at the vexed problem as to the origin of the American Indian. For his benefit and the benefit of any other comrades interested in that question I would like to call attention to a book published by Horatio Hale entitled "The Iroquois Book of Rites." The book is primarily occupied with a history and discussion of the remarkable civic organization of the Six Nations, but he digresses in the body of the book and amplifies his digression in an appendix in an effort to make a case for a migration theory which reverses the usual and brings the Indians in from Europe.

HE MAKES a good enough case for it so that no one who is interested can afford to pass it over. Besides the similarity in language form between the pre-Aryan inhabitants of Europe and the Indians, he cites the fact that the American Indian migrations have all been in a southwesterly direction, proves similarity in culture, cites the fact that the primitive Europeans were fond of the water and had canoes up to 45 feet in length and 4 feet in depth, which indicated possibilities, and then turned to his main argument which had to do with mental characteristics.

Incidentally one of the points he tries to prove is that the Aryan was originally like the present-day Aryans as we know them in the Hindoos, the Persians and the Armenians, dreamers, lovers of contemplation and abstract reasoning with no genius for government. (How about Ghandi in this connection?) And that only the admixture with the primitive people succeeded in making the present-day Europeans and their descendants the dominant race they are today. The blood of these primitive Europeans is strongest in the Basques, the Irish, Scotch, Welsh and Bretons. Certainly in these races we find the passion for political freedom, the shrewdness, practicality, power of observation and lack of taste for abstract reasoning which are characteristic of the American Indian.

ENTIRELY aside from that argument the book is worth reading. However I am not selling the thing. The balance of my errand is this. In my introductory remarks in the same issue I had occasion

to refer to the burning of the *Sunbeam* clipper ship, and the part that a spar had in rescuing the captain and his son. I said that they spent a week on it. I want to withdraw that week. I certainly have that in my notes but relatives of the parties concerned are inclined to be facetious so I judge that I made a break that time.—JAMES P. LONG.

**O**UR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any one may apply for a Camp-Fire Station.



A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

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BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (See next section.)

2. **The Sea Part 2. British Waters**  
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. **The Sea Part 3. Statistics of American Shipping**  
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. **Islands and Coasts Part 1. Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits**

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (See next section.)

5. **Islands Part 2. Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups**

CHARLES BELL EMERSON, *Adventure* Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. **★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1. Cook Islands, Samoa**

TOM L. MILLS, *The Fiddling Star*, Fiddling, New Zealand.

★ (Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)

Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)

7. **★ South Sea Islands Part 2. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumotu, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallia, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).**

CHARLES BROWN, JR., Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)

8. **★ Australia and Tasmania**  
PHILIP NORMAN, 842 Military Road, Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)

9. **Malaysia, Sumatra and Java**  
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. **★ New Guinea**  
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)

11. **Philippine Islands**  
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4., Quartzite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

**12. Hawaiian Islands and China**

F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

**13. Japan**

GRACE P. T. KHUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

**14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo**

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

**15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan**

GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

**16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters**

CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

**17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan**

GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

**18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria**

ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

**19. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo**

CHARLES BEADLE, La Roseraie, Cap d'Ail (Alpes Maritimes), France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)

**20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand**

CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

**21. ★ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East**

R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**22. Africa Part 5 Morocco**

GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

**23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli**

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

**24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria**

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

**25. Africa Part 8 Sudan**

W. T. MORFAT, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**26. Turkey**

J. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

**27. Asia Minor**

(Editor to be appointed.)

**28. Bulgaria, Roumania**

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

**29. Albania**

ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

**30. Jugo-Slavia and Greece**

LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

**31. Scandinavia**

ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

**32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland**

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

**33. Great Britain**

THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, North-

umberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

**34. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile**

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

**35. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil**

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423 Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

**36. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay**

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

**37. Central America**

CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

**38. Mexico Part 1 Northern**

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

**39. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and****Lower California**

C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

**40. ★ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin**

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**41. ★ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario**

HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**42. ★ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario**

A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**43. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District**

T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

**44. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta**

(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

**45. ★ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin**

REBECC H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**46. ★ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec**

JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.)

**47. Alaska**

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

**48. Baffinland and Greenland**

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958 Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

**49. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.**

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

★ (Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.)

★ (Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.)



**50. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico**

H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

**51. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.**

FRANK MIDDLETON, 509 Fremont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

**52. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains**

CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

**53. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country**

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

**54. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.**

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

**55. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.**

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

**56. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.**

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

**57. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan**

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

**58. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River**

GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (See next section.)

**59. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks**

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boat-ing, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

**60. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers**

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

**61. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville**

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okefinokee and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

**62. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians**

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

**63. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.**

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

**64. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine**

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfit supplies.

**A.—Radio**

DONALD McNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

**B.—Mining and Prospecting**

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine

after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

**C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung**

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

**D.—Weapons, Past and Present**

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should not be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snap-aunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

**E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing**

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

**F.—Forestry in the United States**

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

**G.—Tropical Forestry**

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

**H.—Aviation**

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 3940 Newark St. N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

**I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign**

FRED. F. FLEISCHER care of *Adventure*. United States Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. Foreign: Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. General: Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

**J.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal**

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

**K.—First Aid on the Trail**

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazards of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

**E.—Health-Building Outdoors**

**CRAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.,** Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

**M.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada**

**R. T. NEWMAN,** Box 833, Anacanda, Mont. General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

**N.—STANDING INFORMATION**

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write **J. Cox,** care *Adventurer*. For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiver-

ships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address **L. S. ROWE,** Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Washington, D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. **W. A. MORRALL,** Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address **National Park Service,** Washington, D. C.

**Flivvering, Coast to Coast****CHEAPER** than walking:

**Question:**—"My chum and I have decided that we want to go to the Pacific coast *via* foot, and we roughly planned as follows: Hike from here to the wheat belt, work the harvest and then continue on to the coast.

Now here's what we want to know. When ought we to start, and where ought we to head for to catch the beginning of the harvest; also what kind of an outfit would you advise us to start with as regards to a pack?

Of course we want to see as much of the country as possible, so would you be so kind as to outline a trail for us from here to the wheat country and from there to the coast? Also what would you suggest as to maps?

We are city boys. I say boys, but we're twenty-two years old. We both have worked on farms, and I was in the harvest of 1921 in northwest Canada, so we know what to expect in the line of work; but hiking is new to us."—**CHAS. W. FURNAM,** Woodhaven, N. Y.

**Answer, by Mr. Spears:**—Generally speaking, an actual walking trip from ocean to ocean is impracticable. The distance is some 3,800 miles. It takes at least a year if one works his way. From New York to southern Kansas is some 1,500 miles, or from seventy to ninety days' walk—at least three or four months, including time for working one's passage.

If you started in March, say, you'd about reach the wheat country in June, walking—and you would better count on one dollar a day each for expenses, two dollars a day if you eat in restaurants and sleep under cover much of the time.

Now figure a bit. A year means \$360 each; this to be earned. Suppose instead of walking you bought a flivver, \$100 second hand; it'll cost \$100 to \$125 to drive coast to coast in thirty or forty days; total cost, \$200 to \$300. You have \$60 to \$120 (latter for two) saved! And besides that you save more than 300 days for working!

It's cheaper to buy a flivver and ride than to walk; that's the fact for any trip of more than a month or so, or of more than 1,000 miles. That is in cash.

With a flivver you'd jump from job to job if you could find jobs. That's a big question. You've

had experience in Canada wheat; and by getting your outfit, to start about middle May to middle June you could work west, farming as you could, haying, hoeing, harvesting, and some — too, as you know.

I've hiked. It's all right for the first thousand miles. But it's wasteful of time, energy and the rest. You would better be working in the fields with your energy, earning money, than walking, wearing out clothes and shoes; and this through many a dull mile. Ride to the Rockies and spend a month rambling in the high peaks off the trails.

This is the advice I'd give, as you asked. Two of you with a flivver can spend the whole Summer on the road with tarpaulin, two blankets and thirty dollars or so, cooking, sleeping, trouting. You would roll sixty days—6,000 miles—and work four months, whereas, you'd spend all your time walking and earning your way, and it costs three days' work to walk six days.

This'll help you figure things from the best viewpoint, I think. You couldn't walk fast enough to keep up with the harvest jobs; but a flivver would, in the wheat country, enable you to make the jumps right—a hundred miles in the time you'd walk twenty.

Of course, I want you to go, but I want you to go right.

Come again if I can help. You understand walking is a great adventure; but not if one plans as you do, to use your time to best advantage. National Survey Co., Chester, Vt., for U. S. auto trail maps—sectionized book form is best.

**The full statement of the sections in this department as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.**

**Water-Borne Traffic of China**

**A** SAMPAN—that's a word you'll hit if you read the subjoined—is a Chinese flat-bottomed river boat. In Chinese *san* means "three," and *pan* means "board":

**Question:**—"I am deeply interested in China, in the transportation facilities. Have made a study

in rail, steamboating and deep-sea transporting. Spent my time in South America, Australia, West Indies and Africa.

What are conditions in China for a white man, if he could organize a transportation outfit?

Do you think steamboat transportation would offer good competition to rail from Hongkong to Canton? I believe most of China's imports come through Hongkong. Sorry, partner, I couldn't mention more facts, but would gladly exchange information from other ports of this globe."—JOSEPH G. CZEPLA, San Francisco, Calif.

*Answer*, by Dr. Twomey:—There are many kinds of transportation in China. Railroads, steamers, sailing vessels, pack trains, camel caravans, wheelbarrows and man power are all used in transportation.

From your letter I judge that your chief interest lies in water transportation so I will confine my reply to that form of transportation. China has many navigable rivers. On these well organized companies have lines of steamers and sailing vessels. Above the limits of steam navigation goods are carried by light-draft sailing vessels and rowboats. In the upper Yangtze small boats pulled by men on shore are used where the current is too swift for the usual methods of navigation.

There are also many canals which serve points away from the rivers. Sampans, canal boats and sail boats operate on these canals, and the cost of transportation is expensive from a Chinese standard.

I think that you are misinformed about the bulk of China's imports entering the country at Hongkong. Hongkong is a large port. It is one of the largest ports in the world, but it is located at the south of China and the imports that are intended for north and central China never see Hongkong. A great deal of the freight that enters Hongkong is reshipped to other countries.

There are a number of steamship companies operating between Hongkong and Canton. These companies are well organized and when I was last in Hongkong, about three years ago, these companies seemed able to handle all the business between the two cities.

There is a recent book by Harry A. Franck called "Wandering in North China." This book gives the best description of my part of China that I have read in a long time.

#### Note

**W**ILL all "Ask Adventure" inquirers who wrote me at Monroe, Wash., between March 15 and May 15 of this year, please write me again at the same address giving an outline of the former query? This is important, as a number of letters were lost during this period and I wish to check up on what are missing.—ED. L. CARSON.

#### Farming in Maine

**W**HERE deer muss up your wind-shield:

*Question*:—"Will you let me know if there is a good farming district near Bangor, Me., or between Bangor and Waterville; or do you think it would be better near Lewiston, Me., for all purposes? Markets and roads or shipping farm produce?"

I have folders here but don't believe all the real-estate men say; that is, I doubt some of them. I want a farm with forty to sixty acres, cleared, with cordwood and some timber on it. Let me know

what is the best district as a rule. Do you get early frost near Bangor or Waterville? In what month do you get first frost in the fall?"—JOSEPH PARNEAU, Alhambra, Calif.

*Answer*, by Dr. Hathorne:—There are plenty of good farming districts in the vicinity of Bangor, and between Bangor and Waterville or Lewiston, and as a rule there is a good market for farm produce in either of the above cities and good facilities for shipping to the Boston market. There is both good and poor soil, and one must use his judgment in buying a farm. If he wants a place for market-gardening, he can find land that is well suited for that, good sand loam that is easy to till and with the right slope and well drained.

It is the business of the real-estate man to make his ads read as well as possible, but if a man is a practical farmer he can tell at a glance whether the place is what he wants after he has looked it over. There are many good farms in the State of Maine that can be bought for very little money, many of them with good buildings on them, but you need to see them before you buy. If a man has a family that can do the work on a place he is all right and can make a dollar, but if he has to depend on hired help he is up against it.

Frosts come early in some seasons. Only a few years ago there was a frost in this section every month in the year, and I knew of one farmer that planted three crops of beans and lost them all. This rarely happens, but farming and market-gardening is a gamble, like many other things, and you must take a chance.

There is plenty of game in Maine, and some near Bangor. A moose jumped through the wind-shield of an automobile on one of the main streets of the city recently one night. Probably he was blinded by the headlights, which were too near for comfort.

#### Trees That Go "Bang!"

**A**LSO plants that can't stand the human touch:

*Question*:—"I was in the West Indian trade for a few years and whilst in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in the Savannah there, there was a plant I met with; and as soon as the human hands touched it, it crumpled up and died. Could you please give me the name of it?"

Also I would like to know the Latin-American names for the cannon-ball tree and cow-bean as I can't find them in any of the books I've looked up on tropical trees.

And: I would like to know if you ever heard of any harbor that the equator crosses where the channel was so winding that you crossed the equator seven times. I heard this in an argument."—JAMES BOYLES, Seattle, Wash.

*Answer*, by Mr. Barbour:—The plant that "crumpled up and died" when you touched it may have been the little mimosa plant with leaves along the stems, whose leaves curl up tight when the plant is touched. I never heard of any plant that really died when one touched it.

If by the cannon-ball tree you mean a tree with large round pods which explode with a loud noise when ripe, the tree is called in San Domingo *coco* or *caubilla* (mahogany or little mahogany, though really it is not a mahogany). I don't know the Latin-American name of the cow-bean.



Perhaps the winding channel on the equator refers to the mouth of the Amazon, where it could be true, though I never heard of it. There is no harbor exactly on the equator on the western side of South America. I am not acquainted with equatorial regions except in South America.

### Big Game of Canada

**H**UDSON'S HOPE—a name to stimulate the imagination, that!—and the Cassiar country:

*Question*.—"I want to go to a place where all kinds of big game are to be found, not to kill for profit, but for study of nature and habits. Possibly I may kill enough for a fur coat for personal use. How about district around Lake Athabasca or the river between it and the Great Slave Lake? Can I locate up there and build a cabin and stay two years? How about laws and permits from Canadian Government?"

Do Indians inhabit this part of the country, and can I meet and talk with trappers? Are Indians friendly, and could a man get their history, habits, and mode of living and so on?

Route and mode of travel to reach this point, also time to start in the Spring?

I do not expect to make any money from this trip. Have been in an office for seven years without vacation. Now I am going to have a good long one, and one I have wanted all my life. Am thirty-one years old, and unincumbered.

Please do not publish my name."———, Caddo, Tex.

*Answer*, by Mr. Sangster.—Big game usually is not found in various species in one territory. Northern British Columbia does, however, give some combinations, such as sheep and goat, grizzly and some moose and caribou. Northern interior especially—Cassiar—but this is a rather costly trip.

If you want to make it, I can put you in touch with sportsmen who have made it and can give you "been there" dope.

Away in west toward Hudson's Hope and north from that post should give you some good sport.

Various game laws are involved, depending whether in Alberta or B. C. When I know where you decide to go, I can give you outline of same and tell you proper source of official and full information.

Indian bands are scattered all through these regions. They are friendly so long as not abused or their trapping areas are not trespassed on.

Edmonton, Alta., would be a fine point to go to. Then hit either to Hudson's Hope or other territory.

Give me further details on which to base concrete attention and I'll write you promptly.

### The Zulu Race

**H**OW Tshaka, the black Napoleon, made his army:

*Question*.—"I am only a school boy, but should like to know all about the African Zulus. I read the magazine all the time. I should be glad if you will write to me all you know about them."—JOE MOTT, Highland Park, Ill.

*Answer*, by Capt. Franklin.—Way, certainly, but you have given me a large order. However, here

goes; and I hope the contents of this letter will interest you.

The name "Zulu," which means "sky," was, not further back than a hundred years, confined to a small and insignificant tribe under the chieftainship of one Senzangakoni, occupying that portion of the White Umfolozi Valley which falls between the Mahlabatana Magistracy on the north and that of Melmoth on the south. It was owing to the brilliant genius of Tshaka, a son of Senzangakoni, that the numerous tribes at that time living in what is now known as Zululand were by degrees and yet within a dozen years, formed into a single, compact nation, by far the most powerful in South Africa. Because Tshaka belonged to the Zulu tribe—then, as it happened, tributary to the more powerful one, of Mtetwa, occupying territory on the northeast coast of Zululand—the great nation he afterward created came to be known as that of the Zulus.

The subsequent renown of the people excited public curiosity as to the origin of the tribe in question. Endeavors were accordingly made to trace its history further back than was customary even with larger tribes, with the result that the name was found to be derived from one Zulu, son of a certain Malandela, who flourished in Zululand probably during the sixteenth century. This son is said to have quarreled with his elder brother Qwabe, who took exception to the former being presented by his mother with a certain white ox, with the result that Zulu left with his followers to occupy the White Umfolozi Valley, whilst Qwabe went to live nearer the coast on the south side of the Umhlatuze River and in what is now known as Eshowe District.

It was with the help of the chief of the Mtetwa tribe that Tshaka, who was not the proper heir, became chief of the Zulu tribe. No sooner did he become chief than he began to build up an extraordinary military organization and to attempt what had never been attempted before, namely, to fuse the various tribes into a nation.

**B**EFORE, however, the Zulu nation came into existence, there occurred an incident of a comparatively trifling nature which at a later time was destined to exert an enormous influence on the political and social life of the people. Briefly, this is what happened: A young man, suspected by his father—the chief of a tribe—of plotting with others against him, was ordered to be put to death. Those alleged to be concerned with him were summarily dispatched, whilst he, thanks to his extraordinary smartness and agility, succeeded in jumping the outer fence of the kraal and escaping with a wound in his side.

He subsequently strayed into far-off parts, dwelt for a time with this chief and with that, afraid lest his father's emissaries should find him, and eventually came into contact with some European or Europeans. One theory is he traveled as far as Cape Town and there had opportunities of observing the way in which British troops were trained. Another, and more plausible one, is that he came across an European, possibly Dr. Dowan—member of an exploring expedition under a Lieut. Donovan that left Cape Town for the north in 1809—and from him acquired a knowledge of the manner in which Europeans recruited and organized their troops.

Whichever of these theories is the correct one, it is certain he came into touch with European ideas,

for after wandering about for some years, he, on hearing of his father's death, decided to return home and by strategy to gain the position of chief in succession of his father. He went back mounted on a horse and armed with a gun, neither such animal nor such weapon ever having been seen in Zululand. The name of the wanderer was Godongwana, subsequently changed by himself to Dingiswayo—meaning He Who Was Made to Wander—and the tribe was that of Mtetwa—the one to which reference has already been made.

THE rest is soon told. Owing to neither horse nor gun being known in Zululand, Godongwana was almost immediately regarded by the extremely superstitious folk of those days as the "king of witch doctors," and he managed, with a little scheming, to depose his younger brother and get himself appointed in his place, the scar in his side clearly proving his identity.

Dingiswayo began at once to institute reforms, the chief one being the reconstruction of the tribal army on lines possibly suggested by the hypothetical Englishman. He attacked the surrounding independent tribes one after the other. He was later on joined by Tshaka, then quite a young man who for various reasons was unable to live in his father's tribe.

Tshaka repeatedly distinguished himself during the wars then going on, and Dingiswayo was so pleased with his behavior that on Senzangakona's death he assisted him to become chief of the Zulu tribe. Tshaka lost no time in building up a little force of his own on the lines recently introduced by Dingiswayo. He, too, began to attack and conquer neighboring tribes and eventually grew to be so powerful that after Dingiswayo's death he became paramount chief of Zululand, Natal, as well as over large parts of the Cape Colony and the Transvaal.

His army rapidly swelled to formidable proportions—it numbered anything between 50,000 and 100,000 and was victorious wherever it went. It became probably the most terrible and powerful engine of war that had ever existed in this part of the world. The people became enthusiastic over everything military, whilst the warriors, intoxicated with their perpetual successes and the fruits thereof, became more daring and courageous until every native race of South Africa stood aghast at the ruin that had occurred and which appeared still to be in store.

The main end Tshaka set before himself was to create a nation and to govern his creature by means of an army established to extend his sway north, south and west. This army he strove to make as effective as possible. He arranged his men into regiments according to age, caused each regiment to wear a distinguishing uniform, and required every man to use but one (a stabbing) assegai. They were to be ready to mobilize in a day or a night and proceed anywhere at the shortest notice. Efficiency and mobility were the primary objects in view.

Dingiswayo had previously carried his reforms a long way, but the ferocious and insatiable Tshaka, profiting by "The Wanderer's" experiences among strange people, soon surpassed anything that had ever been done in the organization and training of a native army. His force became like a swarm of bees—his last regiment, by the way, was called the Bees—able to mass and organize at once, as if automatically, and move swiftly to overwhelm and annihilate wherever the tyrant chose.

IT WAS when at the very height of his power that Tshaka and his nation came for the first time into direct and continuous contact with European ideas, through the arrival at Port Natal of a little band of settlers, headed by Farwell and Fynn. Fynn was the first to arrive, and did so in May, 1824. He immediately got into touch with the great Zulu king and became his and his people's life-long friend. The white people were soon known far and wide as "the king's friends," and this friendliness has, I believe, continued down to the present day, the Zulu War and all other troubles notwithstanding.

Connected with Tshaka's military system, and an essential therein, was his remarkable practise of absolutely controlling the marriage of every man and woman in the country. He went further and prohibited on pain of instant death all intercourse between young men and girls. It is apparent that, had he not prescribed and enforced stringent rules as to marriage and forbidden the practise of certain loose though long-standing habits, he could never have made the army as mobile and as amenable to discipline as it was.

The rapidity of his operations in every direction against the enemy, or what he was pleased to call his enemy, was amazing. Nothing like it was known before or since.

Tshaka was assassinated in 1828. Having no issue, he was succeeded by his brother Dingana who, after an inglorious reign and after being badly defeated by the Boers with the assistance of Mpande, was put to death by the Swazis on the Ubombo range early in 1840.

Mpande, another brother of Tshaka, succeeded. He had escaped being killed by Dingana—who, besides being treacherous, set about to murder his brothers—as he was supposed to be "rather a fool." He died a natural death in 1873, his son, though not his rightful heir, Cetshwayo, then becoming king.

During Cetshwayo's reign occurred the Zulu War of 1879, followed by the collapse of the Zulu power. Since Cetshwayo's death in 1884, Dinuzulu has been regarded by some as the leading representative of the Zulu royal house, whilst others hold that Manzolwandhle's claims to that distinction are stronger.

HAVING seen something of the early history of the Zulus, let us now pass on to consider a few of their more important beliefs, customs and other characteristics.

They believe that the earth, moon, sun, stars and indeed everything, was created by a Supreme Being called Mvelingqangi; i.e., "The First Appearer," though there seems to be no idea as to within what period all these things were made.

There is a tradition to the effect that all people originally came from a single pair, and this pair sprang from a bed of reeds; but where such a bed is to be found tradition does not say. At the same time, if pressed, a Zulu would probably locate it somewhere in the north, seeing a deep-rooted tradition of their having descended from that direction is widely prevalent, not only among them, but other allied peoples like the Basutos, Xosas, Swazis and Tongas. A certain fairly well-defined section declares that its ancestors "rolled down from the north in a large basket (*isilulu*).

In my opinion the Zulu race today is the finest colored race in the world. There is hardly a man under six feet tall. They are good subjects to their

chief and are a clean-living, law-abiding race. They have given no trouble to the Natal Government since the Bambata War of 1908. I have lived among them, so I know.

### Make Your Questions Specific

**T**HE longer I'm connected with "A. A.," the more I marvel at the patience of the department experts who answer encyclopedic questions like the subjoined, even though they know that rule 4 relieves them of the duty:

*Question:*—"I would like to have you furnish me with any information you can about minerals in your territory."—MISS ELEANOR BOBBER, Chicago, Ill.

*Answer,* by Mr. Newman:—The minerals found in the State of Idaho, are silver, zinc, lead, gold and copper. Now as to information in regard to minerals, I will tell you about copper in its making.

The ore occurs from a few feet to several thousand feet from the surface, and in this country is mostly from deep mines. The ore is mined and sent to the smelter. It is first run through a large crusher and then through a smaller crusher; from here it goes to a large steel roll machine that pulverizes it like sand. It is then run through and over water tables that shake back and forth and throw off the waste matter into water flumes that carry it to the slum ponds. The copper left from these tables is taken to the roasters and goes through a process of roasting; afterward it is placed in cars and taken to large, long furnaces, where it is evenly distributed

through pipes into these furnaces, and pulverized coal is blown from the rear of furnace by air. This process places the metal into a form they call matt.

This matt is tapped out at different times, run into large ladle cars and taken to the converter, another large upright furnace which converts it into copper. It is taken from the converter in large ladles by electric cranes and poured into another hot furnace, where it is tapped out into forms called anodes. These anode forms run through water, cooling them, and they are then placed in cars and shipped to the refinery, where they are dipped into an acid that separates the copper from other minerals such as gold and silver.

Copper is the first metal used by man, and today is second only to iron in its industrial value. Has become indispensable only since the electrical industry was established. Most of the copper produced is now used in that industry, and a large part of the remainder in the manufacture of brass, bronze and other alloys. No satisfactory substitute has been found for bronze as a bearing metal.

Arsenic is a by-product of copper ores, obtained by the process of smelting copper.

**"ASK ADVENTURE"** editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. NOYES, *Adventure*, New York.

## LOST TRAILS

**NOTE**—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the *Montreal Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.



**JACK.** Please send for "Beaty" as soon as possible. Have sold everything. Life is nothing without you. Address, 1893 Lake Shore Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

**MOUGHAN, PATRICK.** Left Radcliffe, Lancashire, England, about 1877 for America. Was soldier in Zulu War. Any information will be appreciated.—Address THOMAS MOUGHAN, 417 Keen St., Danville, Va.

**YOUNGLOVE, J. W.** Last heard of in Gotebo, Okla. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CLARK V. YOUNGLOVE, Mt. Sterling, Ill.

**BUSSELL, ALVIA.** Last heard of at Miles City, Montana, in 1919. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. H. C. BROCK, Box 226, Eldorado, Okla.

**LOYD**—Won't you try it again? Am far from the city, and am terribly unhappy without you and need you. Please write.—Address K., care of *Adventure*.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

**FREEMAN, NORA.** Last heard from twenty years ago in Springfield, Mo. Any information will be appreciated by her sister.—Address MRS. H. C. BROCK, Box 226, Eldorado, Okla.

**SPRECKER, L. W.** Please write to me.—Address DAVID MARGOWSKI, 14 E. 120th St., New York City.

**MATTHEWS, JAMES ANDREW.** Last heard of at Fields, La., in 1911. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JOSEPH BEMETT, Marquand, Mo.

**WOULD** like to hear from Camp-Fire members.—Address H. M. TERRY, 4030 Linden Hills Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn.

**BABCOCK, CHARLES (CHUCK).** Write to your old pal.—Address EDWARD J. BURKE, care of *Adventure*.



**McDONALD, ROBERT.** Missing five years. Machinist in U. S. Navy. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MISS KATE McDONALD, 66 E. 133d St., New York City.

**A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 30th and June 30th issues of Adventure.**

**BRUNSON, CHARLIE ACEL.** Born in Gooselake, Iowa, Aug. 28, 1870. Hazel eyes and dark brown hair, scar on right arm, near wrist, height five feet eight inches. Last heard of in Nebraska. Any information will be appreciated by his daughter.—Address MONA V. B., care of Adventure.

**THE following have been inquired for in either the October 10 or October 30, 1924, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:**

**ALBERT, LOUIS U.;** Atkinson, Finley; Classick, Paul H.; Crosby, J. H.; Dean, Mamie; Henry, James; Hoffman, William; Hoste, Hickman; Larrett, Henry; McMillott, Eva; Margory, Mayo; Benjamin; Noble, William Nathan; Plumtree, Arthur Sawyer; Rojewski, Teddy; Sands, Mrs. Alice N.; Stringfellow, Harry and Jesse; Watkins, Thomas; Wojeik, Mrs. Catherine Schilling.

**MISCELLANEOUS—C. O. M.;** Ewart; V. M. Tex.; will the man who was our guest at Cherokee County, Texas, in March 1923 and who claimed to be one of the Dalton brothers please correspond and reach for the latch-string when passing this way.

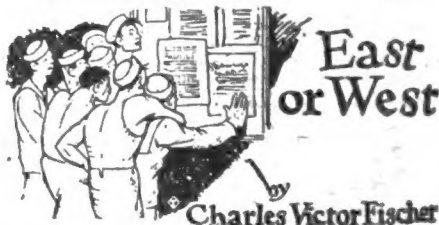
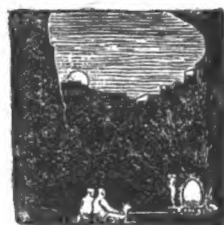
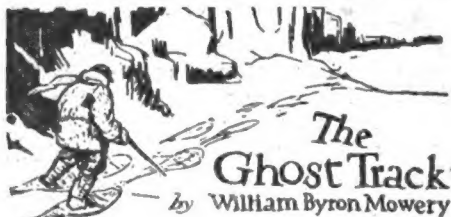
#### UNCLAIMED MAIL

**BOURLAND, C. E.;** Dector, Katherine; Farrell, Sgt. James M.; Wyatt, Clarence.

## THE TRAIL AHEAD

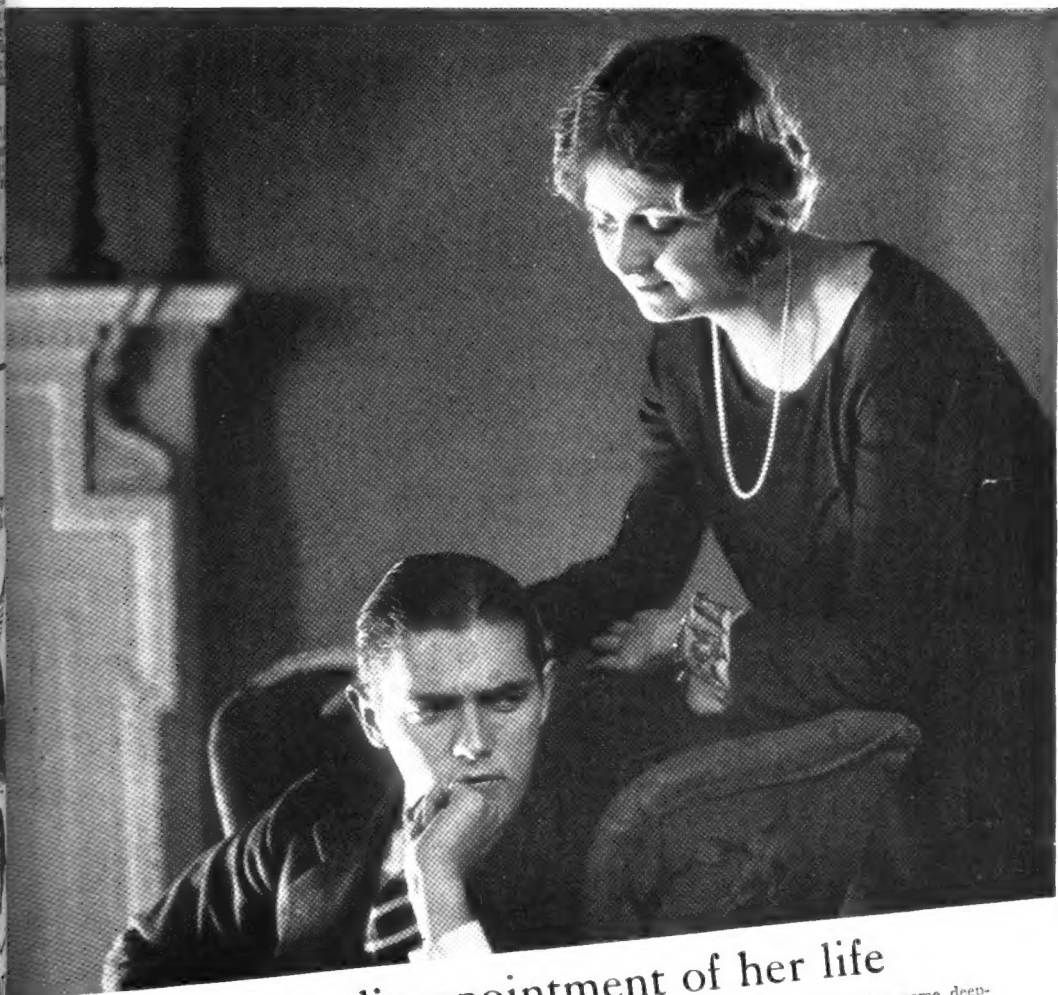
### NOVEMBER 30TH ISSUE

Besides the new serial and two complete novelettes mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you "Dawson Sal," a complete novelette of the sea, by Alvin F. Harlow and Chief Caupolican, and the following stories:—



### STILL FARTHER AHEAD

**THE** three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, Arthur O. Friel, George E. Holt, Thomson Burtis, W. C. Tuttle, John Webb, Edward Speyer, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Georges Surdez, and Gordon MacCreagh; *short stories* by William Byron Mowery, James Parker Long, Romaine H. Lowdermilk, Fairfax Downey, Chester L. Saxby, Charles Victor Fischer, Raymond S. Spears, Nevil Henshaw and others; *stories of the Romans in ancient Britain, of ex-soldiers on the Amazon, of spies in Morocco, of aviators among the hijackers, of fur-traders among the Eskimos, of cowboys, skippers, Indians, vikings, of French soldiers in Africa, of explorers in South America, of adventurers the world around.*



## The great disappointment of her life

**HER SON**—the boy she had hoped everything for! And yet every position he had held since leaving college proved only a stepping-stone into a new failure.

He was her wandering boy—wandering hopelessly from one job into another. But still she loved him.

But like so many mothers she was totally blind to the real reason back of her son's disappointments. Or if she did know, she didn't have the heart to tell him.

You, yourself, rarely know when you have halitosis (unpleasant breath). That's the insidious thing about it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some deep-seated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle. It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant.

Test the remarkable deodorizing effects of Listerine this way: Rub a little onion on your fingers. Then apply Listerine and note how quickly the onion odor disappears.

This safe and long-trusted antiseptic has dozens of different uses: note the little circular that comes with every bottle. Your druggist sells Listerine in the original brown package only—three sizes: three ounce, seven ounce and fourteen ounce. Buy the large size for economy.—Lambert Pharmaceutical Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.

For  
HALITOSIS



USE  
LISTERINE

# Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor"



"Aw gee!"

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